STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF A BLENDED LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AT UNIVERSIDAD DE LA GUAJIRA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated student's perceptions of a bLearning environment at the language school of Universidad de La Guajira and provides insights for future institutional implementations in other undergraduate programs. 22 female and 6 male students participated in this descriptive study. They answered a 44-item questionnaire with closed and opened-ended questions about advantages, limitations and suggestions. The results clearly show positive perceptions as to the advantages of bLearning in improving language skills, specially listening and vocabulary. Other important advantages are self-paced learning, benefit from teacher feedback and more effective mode. Some limitations are no internet connections, slow internet connections, no computer access at home and technical problems. The main suggestions for the improvement of this experience were proper training for students, increase of computer classrooms, increase of blended courses and the solution of technical problems. The limitations or problems perceived by the students do not belong to bLearning as delivery mode but to technical resources that can be granted or solved by the institution. In case the institution decided to implement bLearning in some of its programs then it would have to consider some investments to overcome them.

Keywords: Blended learning, E-learning, face-to-face education, distance education, advantages, limitations, suggestions.

NOTA DE ACEPTACIÒN

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DIRECTOR DEL PROGRAMA

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JURADO

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JURADO

To my mom and dad who always motivated me to walk the long road of learning.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The Internet and related information and communication technologies, or ICTs, have increasingly become products of utmost necessity for people around the world. Young people are known as "the (inter)net generation" because they rapidly become experts in using technology associated to the Internet and "learn, work, play, communicate, shop, and create communities very differently than their parents" (Tapscott, 1998, p. 2). Though the main purpose of their use of ICTs is for communication and for fun activities such as taking pictures, chatting, listening to music or gaming, these technologies can also be used for learning. Nowadays, students prefer searching the World Wide Web for digital information rather than going to the library to search for printed information in the form of books or magazine articles. Most of them do their academic assignments with the help of internet resources by means of computers or by their handheld devices such as smartphones, iPads, tablets and others (Hossain & Ahmed, 2016).

In the field of formal education, the use of ICTs overcomes space and time limitations compared to face-to-face traditional classes. The importance of the topic of blended learning, or bLearning, in language teaching is that it takes advantage of both motivating space and time limitless characteristics of ICTs and of the traditional or face-to-face educational resources.

Problem Statement

In Colombia, universities have increasingly implemented blended learning in undergraduate programs. However, Universidad de la Guajira has not yet started delivering courses through this modality. Currently, the institution has started the process of quality accreditation and it is interested in providing high quality educative processes to prepare highly competent professionals. The rector of this institution has publicly announced the necessity of beginning the implementation of blended learning especially in semi-face-to-face education programs for different reasons. One reason is to be up-to-date with the recent teaching and

learning technologies, and another reason involves overcoming the problems of scarce physical space and to offer more access to education to people who live far from the campus. Now, though the institution has invested important resources in ICTs equipment, it has not yet implemented any form of blended learning in the curriculum.

Within this context, it is important to carry out research studies to know key factors that could somehow affect student language learning processes. Understanding student's computer and Internet literacy, student's perception of learning English in a blended learning modality, their perceptions of the advantages and limitations of blended learning and their suggestions to improve the delivery of blended learning courses will be useful.

Purpose

As a partial response to the institution's stated need, an English course in the modality of blended learning was implemented as an intervention experience. This study investigated student's perceptions of blended learning environment at the language school of Universidad de La Guajira and provides important insights for future institutional implementations of blended learning in the Language school and other undergraduate programs.

Therefore, the purpose of this descriptive case study was to implement a curriculum through the modality of bLearning and document its successes and difficulties through students' perceptions. The University of La Guajira has been investing in both ICT equipment and faculty training in the practice of bLearning, specially in the technological institute known as INTEC, the part of the university in charge of semi-presential programs. Among the possible questions for inquiry that may have arisen from the above topics, this study tried to answer the following main research question: What are student's perceptions of blended learning? The main objective of this study was to examine students' perceptions of learning English in a blended learning course through a questionnaire with closed-ended questions and open-ended questions. From

this general objective stemmed the following specific objectives: 1) to determine students' perceptions of the effect of blended learning on the development of English language skills; 2) to determine student's perceptions of the advantages of blended e-learning; 3) to determine student's perceptions of the limitations of blended e-learning; and 4) to determine student's suggestions for improving blended learning in their undergraduate program. The analysis of the student's answers to the questionnaire revealed factors that provided us with an informed idea of their perception of blended learning in terms of its effects on the development of language skills, advantages, limitations and suggestions.

The study was developed in the subject of English 2 (Level 2 out of five levels) at the Language School of Universidad de La Guajira, Colombia, during the first academic period of 2017. Universidad de La Guajira is a public university economically supported by the Colombian State and the Department de La Guajira. The English 2 group where the study was carried out was scheduled every Tuesday in the city of Maicao. Twenty-eight students whose ages ranged from 18 to 30 years formed the group. 22 of them were women and 6 were men. All of them came from public high schools from Maicao and nearby cities of La Guajira.

This is a socially relevant study because it tried to link the traditional way of the English class delivery to the use of technological resources that are socially accepted, used and recognized as attractive to the students. Besides that, technological innovations in education are currently accepted in our society. It was a viable study because the population belonged to groups of students already assigned to the researcher/professor and the institution granted the necessary support for its development.

In short, this study investigated student's perceptions of blended learning environment at the language school of Universidad de La Guajira in the campus of Maicao. The following chapter contains the theoretical framework. It identifies the main theoretical perspective of the

study, defines key concepts related to the research question and describes similar studies on the implementation of blended learning.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

The adoption of blended learning poses important challenges for the institution and our students together. It is also an opportunity for learning about blended learning implementation. This theoretical framework defines the key concepts of this study as to face-to-face and distant education, eLearning and blended learning. Finally, accounts of international, national, and local antecedents are described.

Face-to-Face Education and Distance Education

Formal education has been traditionally termed face-to-face, and classroom based. It includes a teacher in front of the students inside a classroom. Interaction among teachers and students occur at the same time in the same place (Tucker, 2001). There is almost no interaction outside of the classroom. Interaction among teacher and students continues the next class session (Georgiev, Georgieva, & Smrikarov, 2004). Among the advantages of traditional education, we find the high level of social integration that helps student motivation. However, because of limitations of time and space, not all students can be in the classroom at the same time, mainly if they are adult learners.

For this reason, non-traditional forms of education came to be, such as distance education. McIsaac and Gunawardena (1996: 3) state that "distance Education has traditionally been defined as instruction through print or electronic communications media to persons engaged in planned learning in a place or time different from that of the instructor or instructors." The Commonwealth of Learning (2000) defines distance education as a form of education and learning opportunity where teacher and learner are separated both in time and place and use different media, printed or electronic, with the possibility of occasional face-to-face meetings.

The first non-traditional form of education was correspondence education. In the United States, it began in the late 1800s at the University of Chicago (ICDE, 2009; McIsaac &

Gunawardena, 1996). The interaction between teacher and learner was not regular and had the limitation that geographical distance imposes. All interaction was through reading and writing. The student received all the instructional material via postal mail and returned the developed activities in written form by the same channel (SACSCOC, 2010: 1). One of the major disadvantages of correspondence education was the sense of isolation generated by the written postal interaction that affected students' motivation to end the course. Today, other forms of nontraditional education such as eLearning and blended learning have surpassed formal and correspondence education, but it remains an important educative option due to the digital divide (ICDE, 2009). According to Georgiev et. al. (2004), in more than one century of existence, distance education has evolved from correspondence to eLearning to blended learning.

ELearning

As part of that big umbrella term of distance education, we find eLearning, a form of education delivery that offers new methods for open education based on computer and net technologies (Georgiev et. al., 2004). Zhang et. al. (2004: 76) define eLearning as learning that depends on electronic technology as a means for delivering study materials to remote learners through the Internet. But Internet is not the only medium of delivery. Kurtus (2000) states that eLearning can be delivered either by the Internet, LAN or CD-ROM, and "it includes Computer-Based Training (CBT), Electronic Performance Support Systems (EPSS) and Web-Based Training (WBT), as well as distance learning" (p. 1). For Nichols (2003) eLearning consists of the use of technological tools for the purposes of education by either Web capable, Web-based or Web-distributed systems. In summary, as Georgiev et. al. (2004) state, e-Learning brings to the scene of distance education new methods based on computer and net technologies and these methods vary according to the curricular organization of learning programs.

The term “eLearning” is used interchangeably with *online learning* in the literature. It seems there is no clear-cut difference between the two and they have come to be synonyms: “For instance, one publication uses eLearning as a catch-all term for any form of electronically delivered learning, including computer-based learning as well as video. And a few authors restrict Web-based learning to learning materials on the Internet, excluding the same Web-based materials delivered on CD-ROM” (Tsai & Machado, 2002, p. 1).

Compared to distance education, eLearning has many advantages. The most salient ones have to do with management of space and time and other advantages that stem from these. Arkorful and Abaidoo (2014) highlight that in eLearning students have the possibility of choosing the place and time where they are going to study and interact with the course materials. This flexible management of place and time makes eLearning a cost-effective mode of delivery, it means a considerable reduction of the costs paid by students in expenses like transportation and postal mail. To institutions it means a reduction in expenses because they need fewer buildings for delivering course contents and at the same time they can cover more students who in most cases live far away from their campuses (Al-Huneidi & Schreurs, 2012).

However, eLearning also have some disadvantages. O’Donoghue, Singh and Green (2004) describe the risk of isolation as a major disadvantage of eLearning because of asynchronous interaction. In eLearning students tend to miss the social presence of classmates and teacher. In consequence, the sense of isolation causes a loss of motivation. According to Al-Huneidi and Schreurs (2012, p. 4) other disadvantages of eLearning are “lower learner satisfaction, difficult to use real tools, and high initial costs for developing courses”.

Blended Learning

Blended learning arose to overcome the above stated shortcomings of eLearning (Al-Huneidi & Schreurs, 2012; Tayebinik & Puteh, 2012), since it basically refers to a combined

course delivery which takes advantages of both face-to-face and eLearning, the risk of isolation decreases because of the social presence of the face-to-face sessions.

As Friesen (2012) reports, one of the first mentions to blended learning was done in 1999 by an American training company called EPIC Learning. This company firstly used the phrase "blended learning methodology" in a news release in which the president of the company, David Sterling, was quoted as saying:

> "Our goal is to remain on the leading edge of the computer skill certification and software training business by continuing to provide our **Blended Learning format** to all our clients. Through **Blended Learning** we have combined traditional instructor-led training with multiple forms of self- directed training to create flexible, convenient, and effective learning formats, both in a traditional classroom setting and online. This is what sets us apart from our competition,". (PR Newswire, March 5, 1999, n.p.; emphasis added)

The definition implied above brought some criticism. For example, Friesen (2010) termed it as an ambiguous one because it does not precise if the instructor led-training implies the physical co-presence of both instructor and student or if this co-presence would be synchronically online.

As Motteram and Sharma (2009: 89) state, "The term 'blended learning' is currently a buzz term in language teaching." As most education related processes, blended-learning resists a wide range of definitions and implementations. Tick (2006: 443) refers to blended learning as a "trendy term" that "is used to describe the combination of online tutoring or mentoring, self-paced learning and 'conventional', offline, face-to- face approaches." Behjat and Sadegh Bagheri (2012: 98) present blended-learning as a synonym of "hybrid learning." According to them, "Hybrid learning takes place where teachers and learners come together face-to-face on the one hand and use e-learning elements in the form of computer-based training and web-based training on the other hand" (p. 98). Cruz-Johnson (2012: 12), defines blended or hybrid learning *as* "the

learning environment of a course in which online learning and face-to-face instruction are combined and the contact classroom hours are reduced." Due to the autonomy that characterizes higher education institutions, this classroom hour reduction and the method widely varies. Geçer and Dag (2012) assume this position when they consider blended learning as a teaching design approach. According to them, blended learning is a "process that should be planned strategically to be applied in a teaching institution, a teaching program or in a course" (p. 439).

Smith and Kurthen (2007), as cited in Tomlinson and Whittaker (2013, p. 12), use percentages in order to elicit a taxonomy of commonly used terms related to blended learning: web-enhanced, blended, hybrid, fully online. Web-enhanced is defined as a learning experience where teachers or students use a minimal amount of material on the Internet, for example posting or reading a syllabus or course announcements; blended refers to a learning experience where participants use less than 45 percent of online activities and the rest is devoted to face-to-face interaction; hybrid has to do with a learning experience or course where participants carry out online activities that take 45 to 80 percent of face-to-face class sessions; fully online is a course or learning experience where more than 80 percent of the of learning activities and materials are carried out online. Despite this taxonomy, Tomlinson and Whittaker (2013) prefer to argue that in the context of ELT many of the terms are used as synonyms and the term blended learning is the most commonly used term for referring to "any combination of face-to-face teaching with computer technology (online and offline activities/materials)." (p. 12).

In summary, based on the quoted authors, blended learning can be considered a strategically planned, educational process that takes advantage of the strengths of face-to-face and eLearning methods for course delivery.

Though blended learning is widely used for teaching English, it should be emphasized that it originated in the world of business training. It is originally bound to many areas of

knowledge most of them from the business world. There is no theory of teaching English with bLearning. Concerning theory, it is generally accepted that there is not a unique theory that supporting blended learning: "The theory of blended learning does not seem to “belong” to one learning theory but is rather a method used within different pedagogical approaches" (Torrao & Tiirmaa-Oras, 2007, p. 11). The pedagogical support of Blended learning is based on a flexible eclectic approach that takes insights from several learning theories such as behaviorism, constructivism and humanism (Bartolome, 2004).

Al-Huneidi and Schreurs (2010) explain that behaviorism theory of animal and human learning is centered on the study of what is observable and can be measured. Internal processes of thinking like learning styles are of no interest to behaviorism because they are not observable nor measured. The most salient behaviorism theorists are Edward Watson, John Thorndike, and B.F. Skinner (Anderson & Dron, 2011).

Among behaviorist assumptions somewhat related to blended learning we have: a) learning materials should be organized sequentially for promoting learning; b) students should receive evaluation results and feedback for them to assess themselves; and c) students’ motivation is directed by external encouragement and support. Al-Huneidi and Schreurs (2010) highlight as the main weaknesses of behaviorism the fact that students cannot be able to give correct responses when they have no observable stimulus. Theorists were no able to explain social behaviors which generate with no reinforcements.

The learning theory that perhaps better grounds blended learning in the teaching of English is constructivism. Contrary to behaviorism, constructivism focuses not on observable behavior or sole transmission of knowledge but on how people construct knowledge. Constructivism in the context of blended learning constructivism makes it possible synchronous

and asynchronous interactions among students and teachers making it possible the social construction of knowledge (Anderson and Dron, 2011, p. 84).

According to Tarponolsky (2012) the creators of the constructivist approach are Jean Piaget -founder-, Lev Vygotsky, Jerome Bruner, and John Dewey. A classical book of constructivism is Piaget's *The Psychology of Intelligence* issued in 1950, fifty years before the advent of blended learning. In that book Piaget put forward the theory of child development. Basically, this theory states that "through processes of *accommodation* and *assimilation* children construct new knowledge from their experience mostly acquired when playing. Every separate piece of new experience is incorporated into the existing framework which is in constant process of construction and reconstruction in accordance with the experience being gained" (p. 12).

In the context of constructivism, the learning process is affected in the dimensions of curriculum, instruction and assessment. Curriculum is organized having in mind students' previous knowledge and favoring then promotion of students' problem-solving skills. Instruction is shaped by focusing in linking taught knowledge and students' previous knowledge and interpretations thus encouraging students will for investigation. In terms of assessment, constructivism favors students' assessment of their own process of learning (Al-Huneidi and Schreurs, 2010).

According to the literature, Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow are the founders of humanistic learning theory. Cicciarelli (2007) describes humanistic learning theory as a school of psychology which inspires other dependent learning theories that emphasize students' affective needs. Johnson (2014, p. 1) states that humanistic learning theory has two main tenets: "First, the goal of education should be human development and personal growth (as opposed to higher test scores). Focus on these will naturally increase intellectual achievement and prepare students to contribute to global as well as local societies. Second human nature is basically good." He points

out that humanistic learning theory have nothing to do with secular humanism; that is, talking about humanism in philosophy is not the same as humanistic learning theory in education.

Among different learning approaches inspired on humanistic learning theory, Cicciarelli (2007) describes the theory of immediacy and social presence and cooperative learning theory as the theories that most blended learning practitioner use as scientific support of their projects. For the present study on student's perception of blended learning, the theory of social presence is of special interest. The theory of social presence is developed inside the model called Community of Inquiry proposed by Garrison, Anderson and Archer (2000). The reason for developing the Community of Inquiry model was the need to promote critical thinking in higher education in the context of computer-mediated communication (CMC) such as computer conferencing (Rourke, Anderson, Garrison, and Archer, 2001).

The Community of Inquiry is formed by a worthwhile education experience integrated by the key participants in the educative process: teachers and students. In this model learning takes place because of the interaction of the following main elements: cognitive presence, social presence, and teaching presence (Rourke et. al., 2001). Figure 1 represents Garrison's Community of Inquiry:

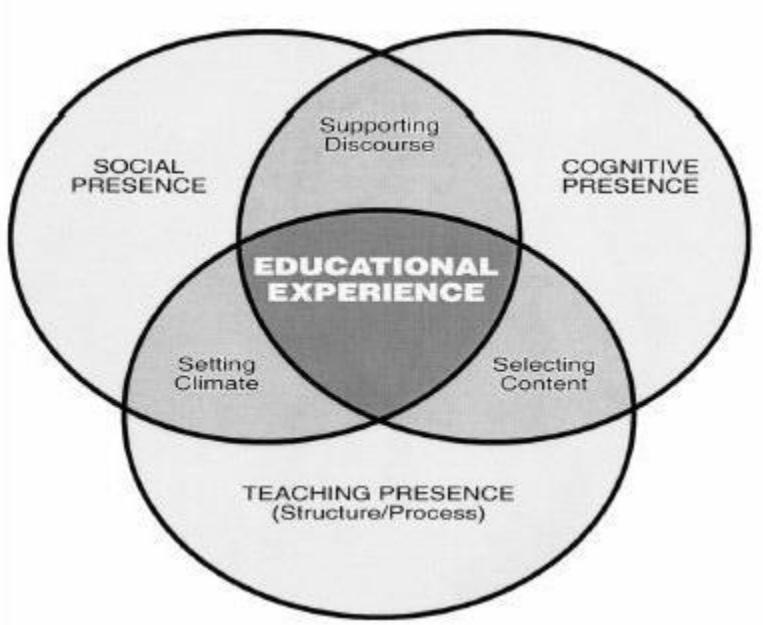

Figure 1. Community of Inquiry. This figure shows the interaction of the three elements of the instructional design model known as Community of Inquiry (Garrison, R., Anderson, T., & Archer, W., 2000, p. 88).

The first component of this model, or the component most basic to success, is cognitive presence. It is defined as "the extent to which the participants in any particular configuration of a community of inquiry are able to construct meaning through sustained communication" (Garrison et al., 2000). Indicators or cognitive presence are: sense of puzzlement, information exchange, connecting ideas, and apply new ideas. However, cognitive presence is not enough to promote a critical community of learners. It is necessary the second component of the model, social presence. Social presence is defined as "the ability of participants in a community of inquiry to project themselves socially and emotionally, as ``real" people (i.e., their full personality), through the medium of communication being used" (Garrison et al., 2000, p. 94). Indicators of social presence are emotions, risk-free expression and encouraging collaboration. The authors emphasize that the binding component of a critical community of inquiry is teaching presence specially when the primary means of communication of an educational experience is computer

conferencing. Indicators of teaching presence are: defining and initiating discussion topics, sharing personal meaning, focusing discussion.

The authors explain that teaching presence have two functions: design of the educational experience and facilitation. The first one is the basic function performed by a professor: selection, organization and presentation of course content and materials and assessment. The second function, facilitation or the actual act of delivery through computer mediated communication can be shared between professor or advanced students. In other words, teaching presence is fundamental for the support and integration of social presence and cognitive presence for the realization of education goals and for obtaining good outcomes. Compared to eLearning, blended learning is benefited with social presence which is a component that lowers the risk of isolation to a minimum.

International Antecedents of Blended Learning

Apparently, eLearning has not met the expectations it initially intended (Bartolomé, 2004: 7) and the dropout rates were higher than the completion rates. On the contrary, most of the blended learning implementation experiences report positive effects on learners' motivation and achievements. For example, Caro and Ahumada (2008), in an experience in Argentina, reported that the students felt more motivated with blended learning methodology than with just face-to-face classes and the percentage of failed students decreased 15%. Lee and Chong (2008) in a case study of Japanese language learning based on blended learning, reported student´s improved motivation and performance. Morales and Ferreira (2008), in an empirical EFL blended learning study in Chile, reported that students on the blended learning experimental group had a notorious language improvement compared to the face-to-face control group. In Turkey, Gecer and Dag (2012) reported that students' perception of the blended learning model course was very positive for their achievement, motivation and responsibilities compared with the only face-to-face

delivery courses. Jia, Chen, Ding, and Ruan (2012), in an empirical study in China, demonstrated that blended learning can improve the student´s performance in vocabulary acquisition.

National Antecedents of Blended Learning

In Colombia, blended learning is increasingly being implemented due to the government policies and investment on connectivity. The NGO ACESAD (Asociación Colombiana de Instituciones de Educación Superior con Programas a Distancia) issued the document Lineamientos Conceptuales de la Modalidad de Educacion a Distancia (2013), which states important insights as to the use of eLearning and ICTs on distant education. This document says that the use blended learning in some Colombian higher education institutions stems from the need of incorporating mediations, technologies and other resources through virtual scenarios in the teaching and learning processes of the face-to-face modality. However, blended learning is beginning to be used on distance education through the development of curricular programs with face-to-face complements, among them laboratory practices and tutorial support.

Ochoa and Roberto (2011), researchers from Universidad Santo Tomás, present some integrative components of blended learning and present some insights for designing, implementing and evaluating blended learning when applying it to learning and teaching English as a Foreign Language. Also, Cantor (2009) carried out a study at Universidad Nacional de Colombia in a program called ALEX (Programa de Aprendizaje Autónomo de Lenguas Extranjeras). This study presented the main features of discussion boards when used in an EFL blended learning course and described discussion boards in the transition from face-to-face education to virtual education. Monsalve (2014) carried out a study which evaluated the students' perception of blended learning after having attended three courses in the School of Education at Universidad San Buenaventura in Medellín in 2014. The results showed that the

students had a highly positive perception of the blended learning courses. The aspects most highly valued by students were the ones related to the subject and the tutors. The less valued aspect were the contents of the course, perhaps because they were presented in the traditional formats such as Word documents, PowerPoint presentations and web links.

Parra (2008) describes the experiences of different Colombian universities in the implementation of blended learning, some of them with shortcomings and others with more success. He comments, for example, the case of Universidad Javeriana. This Institution carried out eLearning programs without having previous experience in distant education and the result was a complete failure and a high cost. Forero (2009), in a training experience with 800 public defenders belonging to the Colombia criminal justice system, reported that blended learning resulted more effective than traditional face-to-face learning. Students were more active or autonomous and the professor role changed to that of an adviser. Finally, Contreras, González and Fuentes (2011), in an experience about mechanical processes at Universidad Industrial de Santander, reported that the use of bLearning can facilitate an alternative overcoming of the limitations of traditional teaching, namely space and time, thus lowering the cost of instruction.

Local Antecedents of Blended Learning

At the local level, studies in blended learning are scarce. Two research studies have been developed Riohacha and Maicao at Universidad de La Guajira. One of them is called "Diseño de una propuesta del uso de Las estrategias docentes con tecnologías de la información y comunicación (Tic), bajo las modalidades e-learning y B-learning en la educación superior" (Sierra and Medina, 2011). The main objective of this study, carried out in Riohacha, was the design of a proposal for the use of teaching strategies with ICT's in the modality of e-learning and B-learning. However, it has not been put into practice.

Another study was done on the teaching of multivariate calculus. It was carried out at Universidad de La Guajira in the campus of Maicao. It is called **"**Entornos Virtuales como estrategia para la enseñanza y el aprendizaje del Cálculo Multivariado" (Rodríguez & Escobar, 2013). This study shows how virtual learning environments can be used for the teaching of multivariate calculus in a collaborative way to obtain meaningful learning. It proposes to support the face-to-face teaching of multivariate calculus with videos, web sites, online classes and a group created in a social network for student social interaction and learning sharing in forums.

Currently, at Instituto de Idiomas of Universidad de La Guajira blended learning has not been implemented neither institutionally nor independently by the authors of the proposal. However, within the area of ICTs, Universidad de La Guajira is currently implementing a program called PlanESTIC which is aimed at promoting the use of information and communication technologies in the learning and teaching processes. This program is being led by a research group called Motivar. Among their activities they implemented Akumaja. This is a Moodle installation with the purpose of helping teachers implement the use of virtual environments in their teaching processes. However, this platform has had little support on the part of teacher perhaps due to connectivity problems of the server which make it go offline frequently besides other administrative problems. This account of different modes of education delivery gives us a general perspective of the current context of blended learning and somehow supports the investigation of students' perceptions of blended learning and provides us with a background to interpret their responses.

Chapter 3: Method

The Setting

Universidad de La Guajira is located in Riohacha, Colombia. It is a public higher education institution financed both by the Colombian state and by Departamento de La Guajira. It was founded in 1976 and started its first program 1977. Currently it offers 21 undergraduate programs and 9 graduated programs. Its main campus is in Riohacha. It also has small campuses in the cities of Villanueva, Fonseca and Maicao. This research study was developed in the subject of English 2 at Instituto de Idiomas or Language School of Universidad de La Guajira in the campus of Maicao, Colombia, during the first academic period of 2017.

An internal rule at Universidad de La Guajira states that English is mandatory for students of all the undergraduate programs. In order to obtain their diplomas, students must go through an English program of five levels offered by Escuela de Idiomas. Each level has an intensity of four hours a week with a total of 64 hours a semester. Each English level is attended by students of different programs. English courses are taught from Mondays to Saturdays in two class sessions of two hours each. From Mondays to Fridays, they are taught in the morning, the afternoon and in the evening. On Saturdays, they are taught just on the morning. In semi-face-to-face education programs, such as Ethnoeducation, English courses are taught in blocks of four academic hours. Each academic hour equals 45 minutes of classes. All the English courses at Escuela de Idiomas are focused on conversation. They emphasize the four communicative skills. The textbook followed by English teachers is Interchange 4th Edition.

Methodology

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, the main research question for this study is: What are students' perceptions of blended learning? Since this research question searches for

knowing the "what" instead of the "how" or the "why", the theoretical stance for this project is interpretivist rather than positivist.

Edirisingha (2012) explains that interpretivism differs from positivism in terms of its ontology and epistemology. Weber (2004) provides seven metatheoretical assumptions that account for the differences between interpretivism and positivism: Ontology, epistemology, research object, method, theory of truth, validity and reliability. In terms of ontology, or the view of the nature of reality and human beings (Hudson & Ozzane, 1988), interpretivism considers the reality as directly connected to the persons who observes. According to Weber (2004), "the life-world has both subjective and objective characteristics. The subjective characteristics reflect our perceptions about the meaning of some world. The objective characteristics reflect that we constantly negotiate this meaning with others with whom we interact. In other words, it is objective in the sense that it reflects an intersubjective reality" (p. 2). In other words, subjects (either researchers or participants) and reality are inseparable, there is no external reality.

The theoretical stance of interpretivism comes from the interpretive school of thought founded by the anthropologist Franz Boas (Boas, 1995). As a theoretical stance, it has to do with approaches that "emphasize the meaningful nature of people's character and participation in both social and cultural life" (Chowdhury, 2014). Among the interpretive methods of research, we can find: (participatory) action research, case study analysis, category analysis (social) constructionist/constructivist analysis, content analysis, conversational analysis, critical theoretical analysis (including critical legal studies, critical race theory), deconstruction discourse analysis (political discourse analysis; critical discourse analysis) and many others (Institute of Public and International Affairs, 2017).

According to the interpretive stance, this research is a case study. This case study project entails describing a phenomenon and its characteristics Nassaji (2015). Knupfer and McLellan (1996, p.

1197) define that descriptive studies are “aimed at finding out "what is," so observational and survey methods are frequently used to collect descriptive data.” Descriptive methods allow the researcher to describe a situation but they do not allow to “to make accurate predictions or to establish a cause-and-effect relationship between variables” (Jackson, 2009, p. 79). This means that descriptive projects do not require hypothesis because they do not search for explaining causes.

Descriptive methods of research are known as case studies, observational methods, surveys and qualitative methods (Jackson, 2009). These methods can involve the collection of quantitative or qualitative information according to the design. Descriptive data is often collected using survey methods and observational methods (Knupfer & McLellan,1996).

This investigation is a case study and, according to Knupfer and McLellan (1996), qualitative and quantitative information will be collected. Case studies have an important place in blended learning research. Since blended learning is a new form of delivery in English Language teaching, many case studies have been carried out to better understand certain qualitative and quantitative variables related to student perception, materials, platforms and so forth (Aleksic & Ivanovic, 2013; El-Mowafy, Kuhn, & Snow, T., 2013).

Multiple definitions of case study can be found. For example, according to Eisenhardt (2002: 8) a case study is “a research strategy which focuses on understanding the dynamics present within single settings.” Bromley (1990: 302), states that case study is a “systematic inquiry into an event or a set of related events which aims to describe and explain the phenomenon of interest.” In other words, this understanding of the dynamics of a single setting is conveyed through systematic description and explanation. In this study, the investigated case is a blended learning English class belonging to Instituto de Idiomas language program at Universidad de La Guajira.

Among the four types of case study stated by Yin (2003) –single-case (holistic) designs, single-case (embedded) designs, multiple-case (holistic) designs, and multiple-case (embedded) designs-, this study is framed under a single-case (holistic design) because its unit of analysis, the case, is the second level class in the context of the 5 level English program of Instituto de Idiomas of Universidad de La Guajira. Merriam (2002) in her definition of case study establishes that "the case is a bounded, integrated system." In this study the boundaries of the case are the beginning and the end of the 16-week period of duration of the case or English level 2 course. The parts or components of the case are the students, the online and physical materials and the LMS Moodle platform.

The single-case (holistic design) of case study was chosen as the type of study of this research work because the English Level 2 class is the first class ever to use blended learning in the Escuela de Idiomas English program. This fact gives it its uniqueness. According to Merriam (2002: 8) definition of case study, it is "an intensive description and analysis of a phenomenon or social unit such as an individual, group, institution, or community." In this study, this intensive description is obtained by the integration of different sources of data such as a survey with closed-ended an open-ended question and observation of activities performed in the Moodle platform of the course. As it was stated above, this case study includes quantitative and qualitative data. This mixed approach is a valid one because we want to describe a case and the case resists both quantitative and qualitative analysis. This mixed approach to case study is supported by Zucker (2009) when she asserts that "Case study as a research method is often indexed in most undergraduate research textbooks as neither quantitative nor qualitative."

Participants

The participants were 28 students, aged from 18 to 30 years. All of them were from different towns of La Guajira. 22 of them were women and 6 men. All of them came from public

high schools from Maicao and nearby cities or towns of La Guajira. None of them worked formally. They devoted all their time to their undergraduate studies. The main reason they took their English course is that it is compulsory to take at least 5 levels of English. If not, students cannot receive their undergraduate diploma. If it wasn´t compulsory, most of them would not take English courses because English is not spoken in most of Colombia but in a faraway Caribbean island called San Andres.

This group of students was chosen for this study for two reasons. The first one, they had already studied a first level of English at Instituto de Idiomas in the face-to-face modality without any help with ICTs or blended learning. The second one, they belonged to the semi-face-to-face education program of ethno-education, a modality that demands from them to be autonomous learners if compared with the ones on the face-to-face modality.

Data Collection Procedures

According to Knupfer and McLellan (1996, p. 1197), "observational and survey methods are frequently used to collect descriptive data." In this study a questionnaire –a part of the survey method- with 40 closed questions was used to collect information (see Appendix A). However, to have a more thorough grasp of the case studied open-ended questions were also asked to the students (see part 3 of Appendix A). The open-ended part of the questionnaire is inscribed in the qualitative paradigm. This form of mixed approach to research, together with their respective data collection techniques, facilitates triangulation of the data obtained and consequently strengthen reliability of the findings.

The purpose of the questionnaire was to gather students' information for answering the above stated research question of this study.

For the construction of the questionnaire, a process of literature review on studies about students' perceptions of blended learning was carried out. The following sources were reviewed. First, Al Zumor et. al. (2013) questionnaire of 33 items which asked about advantages, limitations and suggestions for blended learning; the "student survey questionnaire" which is the Appendix 5 of the book Blended Learning in Higher Education (Garrison & Vaughan's, 2008); the 31 items questionnaire developed by Owston et. al. (2013), 25 items in a 5-point Likert-style scale and 6 multi-choice questions, based on the above quoted Garrison and Vaughan's questionnaire (2008); the CUSAUF or "Cuestionario de satisfacción de alumnus universitarios hacia la formación online" (Llorente, 2008) which has 38 items, 29 items in a 4-point Likert-style scale and 2 open-ended questions; the blended learning perception or BLE survey designed by Torre (2013) with a total of 20 questions in a 5 5-point Likert-style scale.

After the analysis of the above sources, it was decided to adopt Al Zumor et. al. (2013) questionnaire with some changes. For reasons of contextualization, this questionnaire changed in part 1. The items of concerning "Level", "GPA" and "number of blended courses you have taken so far" were deleted because they do not apply to the group of students of this case study. The term eLearning was changed to blended learning in all the items to better reflect the context of this study.

The questionnaire (see Appendix A) is divided into three parts. The first one asked about students' computer literacy, internet skills and blended learning experience:

1 ¿Cómo califica su alfabetización informática?

2. Tiene computadora en casa	Si	No
3. Usted tiene acceso a Internet desde su casa?	Si	No
4. Donde prefiere hacer uso de la Internet para el aprendizaje en línea	En la casa En la Universidad En un café internet	
5. Usted disfruta conversar con otros sobre el blended learning?	Si	No
6. Usted está de acuerdo con quienes dicen que el blended learning es una pérdida de tiempo?	Si	No

The second section contained 33 items about English skills, limitations, advantages and suggestions to better their blended learning process. The items of this second part are organized on a Likert-type scale: “muy de acuerdo”, “De acuerdo”, “Indeciso”, “En desacuerdo”, “muy en desacuerdo.” The questions and the Likert scale are in Spanish to avoid any misunderstanding due to vocabulary gaps:

PARTE II
Para cada una de las siguientes afirmaciones, indique el grado de su acuerdo o desacuerdo marcando (√) la casilla correspondiente: Muy de acuerdo, De acuerdo, Indeciso, En desacuerdo, Muy en desacuerdo

Preguntas		**Muy de acuerdo**	**De acuerdo**	**Indeciso**	**En desacuerdo**	**Muy en desacuerdo**
English skills	1. Creo que el uso de blended learning me ayuda a mejorar mi habilidades de escucha de Inglés.					
	2. Creo que el uso de blended learning me ayuda a mejorar mis habilidades para hablar inglés,					
	3. Creo que el uso de blended learning me ayuda a mejorar mi habilidades de lectura en inglés					
	4. Creo que el uso de blended learning me ayuda a mejorar mi habilidades de escritura en inglés					
	5. Creo que el uso de blended learning me ayuda a mejorar mi pronunciación en inglés					

	6. Creo que el uso de blended learning me ayuda a mejorar mi ortografía en inglés					
	7. Creo que el uso de blended learning me ayuda a mejorar mi gramática en inglés					
	8. Creo que el uso de blended learning me ayuda a mejorar mi vocabulario en inglés.					

To gather qualitative data about students' perception of advantages, limitations and suggestions of the blended learning experience, the third section presents three open-ended questions:

PART 3

1. En su opinion cuáles son las ventajas del blended learning?
2. En su opinión cuales son las limitaciones del blended learning?
3. Cuáles son sus sugerencias con respecto al mejoramiento del blended learning en la Universidad?

According to Zumor et. al. (2013), the inter-rater approach was followed to ensure the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was rated by three English teachers at the English Department of King Khalid University, in Saudi Arabia. The questionnaire was improved based on the written comments and suggestions of the three evaluators. The author reports that the Cronbach's Alpha was used concerning the statistical measure of the reliability of the questionnaire. The Alpha of this questionnaire was 0.79. This measure shows a high level of internal consistency.

The answers to the questionnaire quantitative questions were tabulated with the help of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 23 2015. This is a statistical software package owned by IBM since 2009 and developed by SPSS Inc. It is widely used for statistical analysis in the social sciences, education and in general research. Results for the 33 closed questions of the questionnaire are presented in three groups: advantages, limitations and suggestions. In each group, the results are shown in a frequency table including the respective

item categories and the number and percentage of respondents according to the chosen Likert scale option: Strongly disagree, Disagree, not sure, Agree, and Strongly agree. In the coding book (See Appendix B) Strongly disagree has a value of 1; Disagree, 2; Not sure, 3; Agree, 4; and Strongly agree, 5. Students responses to questions are analyzed based on the mean scores and the respective standard deviation. The resulting means per question were interpreted the following way: 1.00 to 1.50 = Strongly Disagree; 1.51 to 2.50 = Disagree; 2.51 to 3.50 = Not sure; 3.51 to 4.50 = Agree; 4.51 to 5.00 = Strongly agree.

The three qualitative questions of the third part of que questionnaire were tabulated and analyzed using the content analysis approach proposed by Taylor-Powell and Renner (2003). This analysis was done manually with the help of a spreadsheet in Microsoft Excel. First, all the answers given to each open question were listed. Then common themes or patterns were identified. Next these common patters were grouped into categories and percentages for each category were calculated. Students' answers to the second part of the questionnaire (Likert-scale questions) were contrasted to the third part, the open-ended questions, for achieving the reliability of the results.

Ethical considerations

All students accepted to participate. To maintain students' privacy, the questionnaire did not ask for students' names. For the purposes of data tabulation, each questionnaire was given a serial number ranging from 001 to 028.

Chapter 4: Results

To answer the research question of this study, this section presents the results of the analysis of the student's perceptions of blended learning in terms of variables concerned with English skills, advantages, limitations and suggestions for improving the blended learning approach in their English courses. See Appendix B for a detailed reference of the results for each question shown on the questionnaire codebook.

With regard to language skills, Table 1 below shows the results of the perceptions of students as to how the use of blended learning helped them to improve their learning in those skills:

Table 1.

Students' Perceptions of the influence of of Blended Learning on their improvement of English Language Skills

	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Not sure		Agree		Strongly agree		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	Mean	SD
Listening	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	17	60.7%	11	39.3%	4.39	.50
Vocabulary	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	20	74.1%	7	25.9%	4.26	.45
Pronunciation	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	3.6%	19	67.9%	8	28.6%	4.25	.52
Speaking	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	21	75.0%	7	25.0%	4.25	.44
Reading	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	3.6%	21	75.0%	6	21.4%	4.18	.48
Grammar	0	0.0%	1	3.6%	1	3.6%	21	75.0%	5	17.9%	4.07	.60
Writing	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	4	14.3%	19	67.9%	5	17.9%	4.04	.58
Spelling	1	3.6%	2	7.1%	4	14.3%	17	60.7%	4	14.3%	3.75	.93

The listening skill obtained the highest score with a mean of 4.39. Student's perceptions tell us that this skill is the most benefited from the use of blended learning in the English class. The second highest value in students' perception is shared by vocabulary (4.26), pronunciation (4.25) and speaking (4.25). Certain level of skepticism is manifested on student's perception on the effect of blended learning on reading (4.18), grammar (4.07), writing (4.04) and spelling (3.75).

Table 2 presents how students expressed their perceptions on the advantages of blended learning in ten questions of the questionnaire:

Table 2.

Students' perceptions of the advantages of blended learning

	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Not sure		Agree		Strongly agree		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	Mean	SD
Benefit from teacher feedback	0	0.0%	1	3.6%	0	0.0%	13	46.4%	14	50.0%	4.43	.69
Useful and interesting	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	18	64.3%	10	35.7%	4.36	.49
More effective mode	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	7.1%	18	64.3%	8	28.6%	4.21	.57
Access to authentic material	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	7.1%	18	64.3%	8	28.6%	4.21	.57
Self-paced learning	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	4	14.3%	18	64.3%	6	21.4%	4.07	.60
Knowledge of computer and Internet	0	0.0%	1	3.6%	3	10.7%	17	60.7%	7	25.0%	4.07	.72
Enhances communication	0	0.0%	1	3.6%	4	14.3%	19	67.9%	4	14.3%	3.93	.66
Effective use of time	0	0.0%	2	7.1%	3	10.7%	22	78.6%	1	3.6%	3.79	.63
More confident online	0	0.0%	10	35.7%	8	28.6%	7	25.0%	3	10.7%	3.11	1.03
More convenient mode	1	3.6%	13	46.4%	8	28.6%	3	10.7%	3	10.7%	2.79	1.07

In Table 2 the means of the different variables show that students perceived eight important advantages of bLearning. The more rated advantage was *benefit from teacher's feedback* (4.43) through the platform. The second highest rated statement was that blended learning is "useful and interesting" (4.36). The students also highly rated bLearning as being a *more effective mode* of education (4.21) and a means for obtaining *access to authentic material* (4.21). Two more variables received the same rate (4.07): students consider that blended learning allows them to carry out *self-paced learning* and allows them to improve their *knowledge of the computer and the Internet*. With a high mean, they also agreed that bLearning *enhances communication* (3.93) with their peers and teachers followed by their perception that bLearning allows them a *more effective use of time* (3.79). Student answers showed skepticism when considering the statement that stated that they felt *more confident learning online* (3.11) and even more skeptical when considering the statement that stated that blended learning is a *more convenient mode* of education than the face-to-face one. These two last perceptions tell us that though they value positively the use of bLearning they also have some their reservations to this mode in terms of

convenience and feeling confident perhaps for the digital gap or problems for accessing the internet and computers.

To obtain student´s perceptions of the limitations of our bLearning experience, the questionnaire allowed nine statements as shown in Table 3:

Table 3.

Limitations of bLearning according to students' perceptions.

	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Not sure		Agree		Strongly agree		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	Mean	SD
Technical problems	1	4%	13	46%	3	11%	8	29%	3	11%	2.96	1.17
Slow internet connections	2	7%	12	43%	3	11%	8	29%	3	11%	2.93	1.21
Feeling socially isolated	2	7%	15	54%	4	14%	5	18%	2	7%	2.64	1.10
B. Learning less effective	4	14%	9	32%	10	36%	4	14%	1	4%	2.61	1.03
Facilitates cheating	2	7%	17	61%	3	11%	5	18%	1	4%	2.50	1.00
No computer access	7	25%	11	39%	4	14%	5	18%	1	4%	2.36	1.16
Learning preference for books	2	7%	20	71%	2	7%	2	7%	2	7%	2.36	.99
Difficult and frustrating to use	4	14%	17	61%	4	14%	3	11%	0	0%	2.21	.83
Difficult platform instructions	5	18%	16	57%	4	14%	3	11%	0	0%	2.18	.86

For a better understanding of the information in Table 3, it is important to remember the values of the Likert scale options: “muy de acuerdo” (Strongly Agree) = 5; “De acuerdo” (Agree) = 4; “Indeciso” (Not Sure) = 3; “En desacuerdo” (Disagree) = 2; “Muy en desacuerdo” (Strongly Disagree) = 1. Observing the behavior of students’ responses, it can be noticed that the mean of each variable is under the value of 3.00, which equals the value of “not sure” (indeciso). This coincidence reveals that students may not be not sure enough of the limitations of bLearning in their English classes. The main limitations reported by the students were *technical problems* concerning the Moodle platform and the computer (2.96) and *slow internet connections* (2.93). Two more limitations fell into the middle of the “do not agree” and “not sure” values. They are *Feeling socially isolated* (2.64) and *bLearning is less effective* (2.61). The other two limitations are even less rated. They are bLearning *facilitates cheating* (2.50) and using bLearning is hard to

me because I have *no computer access* (2.36). the other limitation is not worth mentioning because they not really limitations according to their means.

Table 4 shows the results of the last set of Likert scale questions about suggestions for improving the experience of bLearning in the English class:

Table 4.

Suggestions for improving the bLearning experience

	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Not sure		Agree		Strongly agree		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	Mean	SD
Proper training for students	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	15	53.6%	13	46.4%	4.46	.51
Increase of computer classrooms	1	3.6%	1	3.6%	0	0.0%	13	46.4%	13	46.4%	4.29	.94
Solve technical problems	1	3.6%	0	0.0%	1	3.6%	16	57.1%	10	35.7%	4.21	.83
Increase of blended courses.	0	0.0%	1	3.6%	1	3.6%	18	64.3%	8	28.6%	4.18	.67
Reward the distinguished	0	0.0%	1	3.6%	1	3.6%	18	64.3%	8	28.6%	4.18	.67
Decrease blended courses	5	17.9%	14	50.0%	1	3.6%	6	21.4%	2	7.1%	2.50	1.23

The results of the suggestion statements partially support the findings on the limitation statements shown on Table 3. Five statements scored more than 4.17. The highest one was *proper training for students* (4.46) on the use of bended learning is the most rated category. This could be related to the *technical problems limitations* on table 3. The second more scored suggestion is *increase of computer classrooms* (4.29) which is a manifested need for taking advantage of bLearning given the limitations of *technical problems* (4.21), *internet connection* or *no computer access*. The last two important suggestions, increase of blended courses and reward the distinguished scored the same (4.18). The last suggestion, *decrease of blended courses*, was rated the lowest (2.50). This low rate is in inverse correlation to the clearly stated suggestion of the *increase of blended courses.*

The above quantitative results stemmed from the questionnaire´s closed-ended questions. The following are the results of the analysis of the qualitative data gathered with the questionnaire´s open-ended questions.

Three open-ended questions sought to freely elicit student's perceptions as to limitations, advantages and suggestions for the improvement of bLearning at Universidad de la Guajira. See Appendix C for a look on the process of categorization and coding of students' answers.

Figure 2 presents the categories that emerged from student's responses to the first open-ended question, "In your opinion, what are the advantages of bLearning":

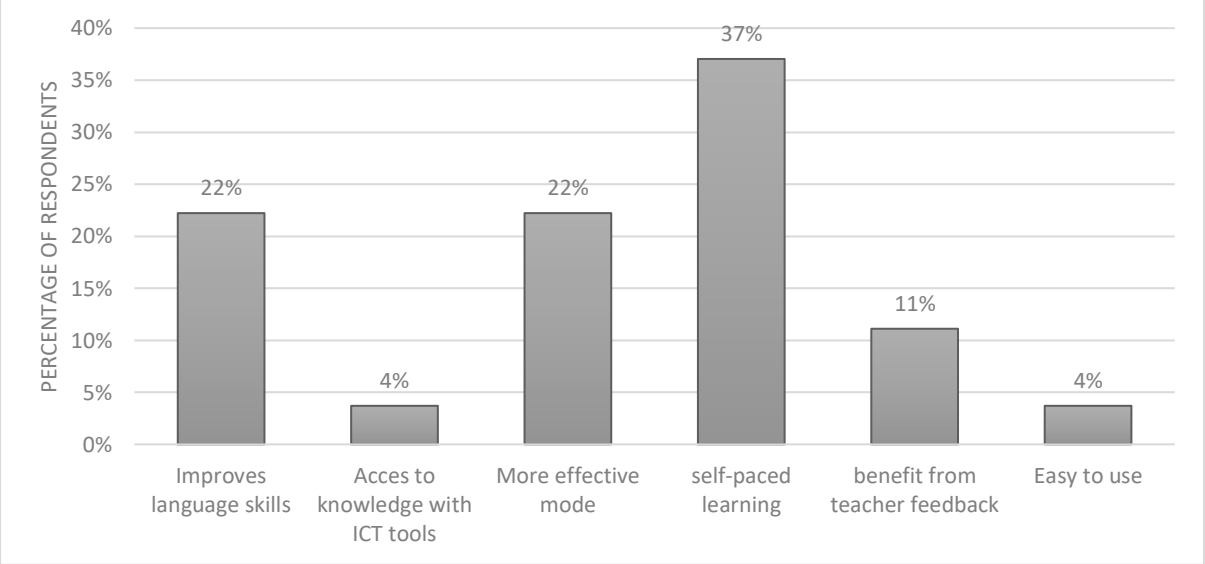

Figure 2. Advantages of blended learning.

Three main categories emerged: self-paced learning (37%), more effective mode (22%) and improves languages skills (22%). The following are samples of student's responses from where the *self-pace learning* category emerged. They are not translated into English in order to preserve the original ideas expressed by students:

-"Que se puede aprender de manera autónoma."

-“Mi opinión sobre las ventajas del blended learning es que aprendemos más en nuestra casa sin salir de ella.”

- “La ventaja de tener blended learning es que medimos la autonomía y responsabilidad del aprendizaje.”

- “Me gusta este método de enseñanza ya que puedo realizar mis actividades en cualquier lugar y espacio, puedo escuchar y observar muchas veces las actividades.”

- “Facilita la realización de actividades académicas. Puedo trabajar a mi propio ritmo teniendo en cuenta mi tiempo y disponibilidad.”

- “Que con el blended learning podemos retroalimentar lo que el docente uso en el aula de clases. Puedo practicar y estudiar ya sea desde la casa o un café internet.”

- “Para mí, una de las ventajas importantes que tiene el blended learning es que puedo trabajar a mi propio ritmo, que es fundamental cuando se tienen otras ocupaciones como trabajar y estudiar al mismo tiempo.”

- “Las ventajas del blended learning es muy interesante por que a través de la web tenemos más tiempo para hacer las cosas de la casa y también nos queda tiempo para estudiar.”

- “Aumenta la apropiación de conocimientos, es flexible.”

- “Ventajas como: uso del tiempo, y a mi propio ritmo.”

According to *self-paced learning* category, students seem to appreciate the fact of the availability of the contents and activities at any hour of the day and from anywhere connected to the Internet. This availability allows them to study at their own pace: “Para mí, una de las ventajas importantes que tiene el blended learning es que puedo trabajar a mi propio ritmo, que es fundamental cuando se tienen otras ocupaciones como trabajar y estudiar al mismo tiempo”. It also and gives them the opportunity to better plan the time for daily activities including work.

The same level of appreciation (22%) was given to *improves language skills* and *more effective mode*. Some student’s responses about the improvement of their language skills are the following:

- “Nos proporciona mejoramiento en el aprendizaje del inglés. Nos ayuda con el mejoramiento de lectura y aprendizaje del inglés tanto en lectura y escritura.”
- “Permite mejorar nuestra capacidad en el uso de las tic. Nos ayuda a mejorar en nuestro vocabulario pues en esta modalidad encontramos muchos audios.”
- “La ventaja del blended learning es que ayuda a desarrollar las habilidades y potencialidades del ser humano y ayuda a desarrollar el proceso de enseñanza y aprendizaje.”
- “Aprender más a reforzar el vocabulario en inglés lo cual será necesario en el futuro. Aprender más a reforzar el vocabulario en inglés lo cual será necesario en el futuro.”
- “Las ventajas son que tenemos mejor manejo del inglés, mejor escritura, pronunciación etc.”
- “Interactuar con los maestros y podemos mejorar el habla y la lectura de los textos.”

Students value positively the availability of activities and resources to practice language skills: “Permite mejorar nuestra capacidad en el uso de las tic. Nos ayuda a mejorar en nuestro vocabulario pues en esta modalidad encontramos muchos audios”. The possibility of listening activity audio files online or downloading them for later listening is highly valued by students perhaps because they can take such files anywhere no matter if they have no Internet connection. This possibility of blended learning, among others, could be the reason for considering it as a *more effective mode.*

Figure 3 presents the categories that emerged from students responses to the second open-ended question, “In your opinion, what are the limitations of bLearning?”:

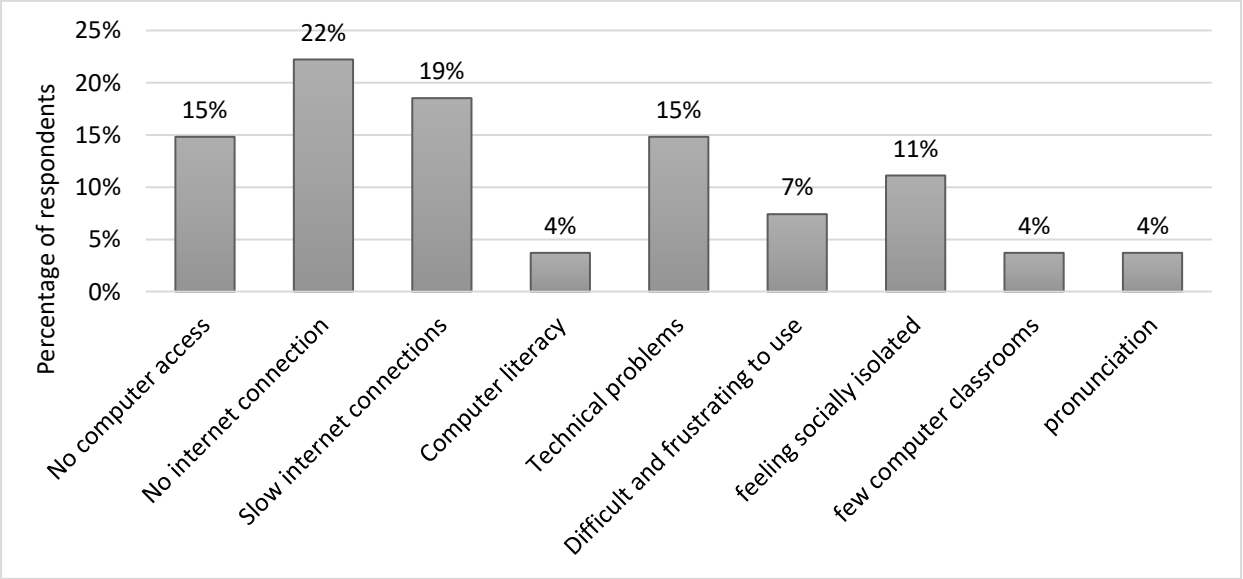

*Figure 3***.** Limitations of blended learning.

Four main categories emerged: *no computer access* (15%), *no internet connection* (22%), *slow internet connections* (19%) and *technical problems* (15%). The following are samples of student’s responses where the *no internet connection* category emerged:

- “Que algunas personas a veces no poseen internet en su casa.”
- “Esta estrategia se vuelve limitada cuando los usuarios no tienen acceso a la plataforma.”
- “La mala conexión de Internet, la falta de Internet en casa, no tener dinero para pagar horas en café internet.”
- “La falencia de Internet en las comunidades la cual fue una falencia para este programa.”
- “Acceso a Internet.”
- “Ciertamente a muchos las limitaciones del blended learning es la conexión a Internet.”

Students identified two main limitations both related to the internet: *no Internet connection* (22%) and *slow Internet connection* (19%). These emergent categories show students high perception of the dependence of bLearning from the availability of internet connections. *Slow internet connection* (19%) is also seen as a main limitation almost at the level of having *no internet connection* (22%) due to the difficulties it causes for completing online activities. No internet connection can also be seen as the consequence of the digital divide in La Guajira region where most of the population is below the minimum level of poverty. In this economic situation, having Internet at home is expensive.

The other two emergent categories are *no computer access* (15%) and *technical problems* (15%). Having *no computer access* or having no computer for interacting with the platform is not seen as a high limitation perhaps for the existence of Internet cafes or computer classrooms in the university. *Technical problems* are as important as *having no computer* concerning the difficulties it poses for students when approaching the study of English with the help of the platform. For example, sometimes sound files do not play due to the absence of the flash player plugin or a Mp3 player in the computer. Other technical problems have to do with hardware such as speakers connections and their controller software or drivers.

Figure 4 presents the categories that emerged from students responses to the third open-ended question, “What are your suggestions for the improvement of bLearning at the university?”:

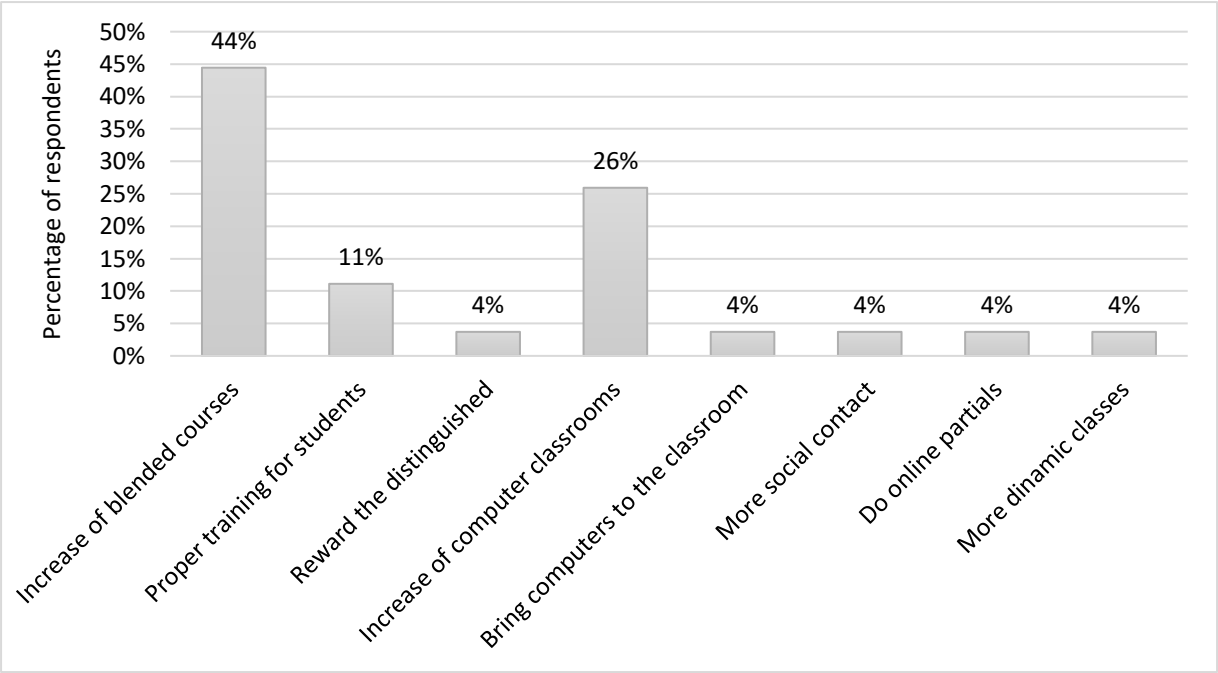

Figure 4. Suggestions for the improvement of blended learning.

Two main categories emerged: *increase of blended courses* (44%) and *increase of computer classrooms* (26%). The following are samples of student's responses where the *increase of blended courses* category emerged:

- "Que se deben proporcionar más en la Universidad para tomar las como una herramienta de mayor utilidad."
- "Que el manejo del blended learning se aplique en todos los estudiantes."
- "Importante sería que se implementara o se diera a conocer mejor el blended learning en nuestra Universidad."
- "La sugerencia sería que nos dieran más cursos para usar blended learning."

- "Quisiera que mejorara en este tipo de estudios en la Universidad ya que algunos profesores no manejan la tecnología y sólo se dedican a la educación tradicional."
- "Personalmente que este medio sea utilizado para todos los estudiantes de universidad en el proceso de enseñanza del inglés."
- "Implementarlo en todas las carreras."
- "Sería bueno que todas las carreras utilicen el blended learning."
- "Que las carreras utilicen más este método. Que se hagan socialización es sobre el debido uso de esta herramienta de aprendizaje. Que los docentes como los estudiantes utilicen este método. Que haga clases por línea y actividades."

These main categories (*increase of blended courses* and *increase of computer classrooms*) together add up 70%. Both emphasize the word "increase". This tells us that students highly perceive the benefits of bLearning to their study processes and want it to have a wider presence in their institution. The suggestions of *increase of blended courses* (44%) in such a high percentage reveals that students positively perceive the benefits and possibilities of bLearning for learning English and other subjects: "Sugiero que en todas las carreras de la Universidad se utilice el blended learning". This category has a positive correlation with the category *increase of computer classrooms* (26%). The suggestion of an *increase of blended course*s should be accompanied by an *increase of computer classroom*s: "Que nuestro programa de formación debe aumentar el número de cursos con ayuda del blended learning, el número de salas de Internet se debe aumentar". Finally, these suggestions imply in themselves a high level of positive perception of bLearning in English and other subjects even despite the above stated limitations generated bv the digital divide.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusions

Discussion

Table 1 shows the achievement of objective number 1 of this study, to determine the effect of bLearning on the development of English language skills. It presents students perceptions about the influence of bLearning on the development of English language skills. Listening and vocabulary skills obtained higher ratings. The highest rating was given to the listening skill. This may be caused by integration of sound and video in the course platform. The videos and sound files of different activities were available to be listened online or to be downloaded. Students downloaded sound files and saved them to their smart phones and computers and used them for studying and preparing course activities. They used their earphones connected to their devices to have a better listening experience. This high perception on the importance of bLearning for developing the listening skill matches the findings of a study on the use of bLeaning for the development of the listening skill conducted by Caruso, Gadd, and Tebbit (2017). They also found that bLearning highly improves the listening skill. 92% of their interviewed students answered positively to the question "Do you think that the activities helped you improve your listening skills?"

The vocabulary skill received the second highest ratings perhaps due to the exposure to links to other source of materials than the text book and to the availability of online dictionaries and translators in the course platform. These resources engaged students on the search for new words or phrases as they came through them in their study sessions. This high perception of bLearning effect on vocabulary and listening skills was also found in the study of Jia et al (2012). In a bLearning experiment the authors found that students performance in English vocabulary and listening was improved and better than the control group. In a study with 167 English language

students in a Turkish university, Istifci (2017) found that vocabulary was the most rated skill (76%) as to the effect of bLearning.

Concerning the other skills, the means below 4.25 and above 4.04 discloses the perception of a positive effect of bLearning. However, a mean of 3.75 though in the range of "Agree" (3.50 to 4.50 as stated above) show a less level of agreement as to the effect of bLearning on spelling. The general perception of a positive effect on pronunciation, speaking, reading, grammar and writing can be found in other research studies. Istifci (2017) also found that students perceived an important influence of bLearning on the development of the pronunciation, speaking, reading, grammar, and writing skills. Banditvilai (2016), in a study intended to determine how bLearning help on the development of language skills as opposed to face-to-face instruction, found that students felt that bLearning enhances the development of their 4 language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Answers to the first open-ended question, "In your opinion, what are the advantages of eLearning?" corroborated the positive effect of bLearning in the development of English language skills. One emergent category was "improves language skills" with the support of 22% of the students together with *self-paced learning* and *more effective mode*.

Students' answers to questions related to advantages of bLearning helped achieve the second objective of this study. The means of eight (4.43, 4.36, 4.21, 4.21, 4.07, 4.07, 3.93, 3.79) of the ten items revealed that students agree with the advantages of bLearning. "Benefit from teacher feedback" and "useful and interesting" obtained the highest means. A mean of 4.43 reveals that students highly value the advantage of teacher online feedback for its almost immediacy as opposed to the face-to-face teacher feedback which takes a longer time to be received. Emails, forums, text messages and chat give students a perception of obtaining a better form of feedback. A similar advantage of bLearning is exposed in a Lloyd-Smith's study (2010).

She explains that “blended instruction allows ample opportunities for building social relationships between the teacher and students” (p. 509). The advantage of teacher feedback in bLearning is also described by Gould (2003). He argues that there is “an increased interaction of students with their fellow classmates and with the course instructor” (p. 56). This increased interaction takes place because bLearning provides less-intimidating communication scenario that promotes student participation with peers and tutors.

The second highest score considered the advantage of being “useful and interesting” perhaps for the innovative side of the approach and the motivation of accessing the course materials from different devices, at any time of the day and from any place with Internet connection. The very fact of studying, for example, a dialogue activity and watching its video on their smartphones -which they previously used just for chatting- gave this bLearning experience a perception of usefulness. Two other items, “More effective mode” and “Access to authentic material” both obtained a mean of 4.21 which show that student agree on them as advantages of bLearning. Perhaps bLearning is considered a “more effective mode” because of the above stated advantages of fast teacher feedback, usefulness and no time or space barriers whenever the student have access to a computer and the Internet. For example, a student who fails to attend a face-to-face class session can rapidly catch up and prepare for an upcoming exam or assignment deadline. Even from his smartphone the student can read the teacher’s forum posts and download documents, listen to audio files and watch videos poste don the course platform. “More effective mode” is corroborated as a category in the responses to the first question of the qualitative part of que questionnaire with a frequency of 22%.

The pair “Self-paced learning” and “Knowledge of computer and Internet” both obtained a mean of 4.07 which means that students agree on them as advantages of bLearning. This “self-pace learning” allows the organization the study schedule and the execution of activities at any

time of the day when they are free. Also exercises of vocabulary, listening, Reading and grammar can be done several times until the student learn the topic and obtain a better score. "Self-paced learning" also emerged as a category in the qualitative part of the questionnaire as the most salient category with 37% of the students.

Students agreed on "Knowledge of computer and Internet" as an advantage because they feel motivated to learn more about the use of the information and communication technologies and the computer to take advantage of the bLearning mode. For example, with the blended experience students took advantage of the voice recording capabilities of their smartphones through different applications.

The lowest means among the agreed advantages of bLearning were obtained by the items "Enhances communication" (3.93) and "Effective use of time" (3.79). It is notorious that bLearning enhances communication better than face-to-face classes because of synchronous and asynchronous properties of communication Internet. A teacher post on the news forum stays there to be read later and again while a face-to-face announcement at the classroom cannot be retrieved for later reference. "Effective use of time" may be perceived as an advantage for the above stated fact of constant availability of the course platform no matter the hour of the day or the distance from school.

Students were not sure of the advantages of bLearning concerning the items of "More confident online" and "More convenient mode". The mean for "More confident online" (3.11) tells us that they do not feel sure of this as an advantage. This low score may be because bLearning is a new and demanding experience for them. Though they highly agreed above on bLearning as "useful and interesting" they are no sure of being "more confident online" perhaps for the additional technical competences that it demands. When asked the question "E-Learning is more convenient for me than face-to-face learning", the "disagree" score (2.79) may be due to

technological mediation when compared to face-to-face learning which practically do not require any other mediation between the teacher and the student.

The third objective of this study intended to determine student's perceptions of the limitations of blended e-learning. Table 3 shows the ratings of the items considered possible limitations to bLearning. However, it can be noticed that none of the possible limitations reached the minimum "Agree" mean score of 3.50. The four highest of them are in the range of "Not sure" or 2.51 to 3.50. The rest fall in the range of "Disagree" or 1.51 to 2.50.

The following limitations fall in the "Not sure" range: Technical problems (2.96), Slow internet connections (2.93), Feeling socially isolated (2.64), B. Learning less effective (2.61). The rest of the possible limitations fall in the range of "Disagree" with means of less than 2.50. The rates of the means are also corroborated by the standard deviations which are greater than one thus meaning a dispersion or disparity of opinions with respect to the different items. In general, the means and standard deviation measures suggest that there is no agreement as to the limitations of bLearning. These lack of agreement is also observed in the low percentages of the main limitations emerged in the responses to open-ended questions: *no Internet connection* (22%), *slow Internet connection* (19%), *no computer access* (15%), and *technical problems* (15%). The coincidence in low ratings as to the limitations might be explained because of a possible bias due to the impressive and dominant position of the technological mediation.

The most rated limitations in Table 3 (slow internet connections and technical problems) have coincidences with the two main limitations determined in the investigation of Al Zumor (2013). They are *connectivity major problem* (4.13) and *Technical problems faced* (3.66). The difference is that Al Zumor perceived limitations were rated in "Agree" range that goes from 3.51 to 4.50.

The last set of questions from the quantitative part of the questionnaire contributes to the

achievement of the fourth objective of this study: “to determine student’s suggestions for improving bLearning in their undergraduate program.” As to the suggestions for improving the bLearning experience, all the items except one received ratings with means within the ratings range of “Agree”, from 4.18 to 4.46. “Proper training for students” received the highest rating with a mean of 4.46. Though most of students (93%) in the first part of the questionnaire expressed they had at least a good computer literacy, this suggestion is perhaps relating to the complexities of the eLearning platform, the Moodle platform in the case of this study. There are components of the platform that require a kind of training, for example how to upload an assignment, how to post information in a forum, uploading photos, checking the grades, among other specific tasks. The second most rated item with a mean of 4.29 is “Increase of computer classrooms” because the available ones are not enough for the demand. This suggestion is in close connection to the suggestion of an increase of blended course which obtained a mean of 4.18. If more blended courses are delivered, then more computer classrooms are needed. Another important suggestion is “solving technical problems” with a mean of 4.21, these technical problems have to do with problems like installation of software programs necessary for running all the functions of the platform, for example the installation of flash player on the computer to watch video, sound players to listen to audio files, compression programs to uncompressed files among others. Also with a mean of 4.18 students agreed on “reward the distinguished” as a suggestion for improving the bLearning experience. This suggestion might be about the human need for reward for a well-done job or activity especially when the activity requires time, effort and resources.

Finally, the suggestion for a “decrease of blended courses” obtained a “Disagree” mean of 2.50. A negative correlated rating to the suggestion of “increase of blended courses” explained above with an “Agree” mean of 4.18.

Conclusions

The present research study contributed information as to the perceptions of students about bLearning in the teaching of English at Universidad de La Guajira. Students' responses to the questionnaire clearly showed that the bLearning mode of delivery is considered a positive experience that enhances the process of learning. The contrast of open-ended question responses to closed questions responses consistently highlighted the positive influence of bLearning in improving language skills. This contrast also revealed a consistent perception of *self-paced learning* and *a more effective mode* as important advantages. However, though students perceived bLearning a *more effective mode*, they did not agree on considering bLearning as *a more convenient mode* over face-to-face mode perhaps because of its dependence on the mediations of Internet and computers, resources which are not always available to them in their homes.

The limitations or problems perceived by the students do not belong to bLearning but to technical resources that can be granted or solved by the institution. Limitations like no internet connections, slow internet connections, no computer access at home and technical problems though they affect bLearning, do not belong to bLearning per se but to the digital divide in the socio-economic context of students. In case the institution decided to implement bLearning in its programs then it would have to consider some investments to overcome these limitations.

Students' suggestions for improving bLearning denote that the main limitations stated above do not affect their positive perceptions towards this innovative mode of education. Quantitative and qualitative responses coincide in suggesting an increase of computer classrooms and an increase of blended courses. These suggestions are an important push to possible institutional plans for implementing this modality.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Students Questionnaire

Cuestionario

Estimado estudiante,
Este cuestionario tiene como objetivo explorar su opinión respecto al uso del blended-learning en nuestro curso de inglés 2: ventajas, limitaciones y propuestas de mejora. Se ruega llenar este cuestionario completamente. Sus respuestas objetivas y veraces ayudarán a conseguir una evaluación efectiva de esta experiencia.
Gracias.

1 ¿Cómo califica su alfabetización informática?

◯ Débil ◯ Buena ◯ Muy buena ◯ Excelente

2. Tiene computadora en casa	Si	No
3. Usted tiene acceso a Internet desde su casa?	Si	No
4. Donde prefiere hacer uso de la Internet para el aprendizaje en línea	En la casa En la Universidad En un café internet	
5. Usted disfruta conversar con otros sobre el blended learning?	Si	No
6. Usted está de acuerdo con quienes dicen que el blended learning es una pérdida de tiempo?	Si	No

PARTE II

Para cada una de las siguientes afirmaciones, indique el grado de su acuerdo o desacuerdo marcando (√) la casilla correspondiente: Muy de acuerdo, De acuerdo, Indeciso, En desacuerdo, Muy en desacuerdo

Preguntas		**Muy de acuerdo**	**De acuerdo**	**Indeciso**	**En desacuerdo**	**Muy en desacuerdo**
	1. Creo que el uso de blended learning me ayuda a mejorar mi habilidades de escucha de Inglés.					

Áreas del inglés	2. Creo que el uso de blended learning me ayuda a mejorar mis habilidades para hablar inglés,					
	3. Creo que el uso de blended learning me ayuda a mejorar mi habilidades de lectura en inglés					
	4. Creo que el uso de blended learning me ayuda a mejorar mi habilidades de escritura en inglés					
	5. Creo que el uso de blended learning me ayuda a mejorar mi pronunciación en inglés					
	6. Creo que el uso de blended learning me ayuda a mejorar mi ortografía en inglés					
	7. Creo que el uso de blended learning me ayuda a mejorar mi gramática en inglés					

	8. Creo que el uso de blended learning me ayuda a mejorar mi vocabulario en inglés.					
Preguntas		**Muy de acuerdo**	**De acuerdo**	**Indeciso**	**En desacuerdo**	**Muy en desacuerdo**
Ventajas	9. El blended learning es más conveniente para mí que el aprendizaje presencial.					
	10. EL blended learning mejora la comunicación entre los estudiantes y maestros.					
	11. El blended learning hace que la enseñanza y el aprendizaje sean más eficaces; ya que integra todas las formas de medios de comunicación, impresión, audio, video y animación.					
	12. Me parece que el blended learning es interesante y útil.					

	13. Me gusta el blended learning porque puedo trabajar de acuerdo a mi propio ritmo.					
	14. Blended learning me ayuda a desarrollar el conocimiento de ordenador e Internet					
	15. Me siento más confiado cuando utilizo Inglés en línea que cuando lo uso en la clase.					
	16. El blended learning ayuda a que use el tiempo con eficacia.					
	17. Me beneficia la retroalimentación dada por mi instructor a través la plataforma (mensajes a través del foro del profesor).					
	18. Blended learning me da acceso a materiales auténticos en inglés.					

Preguntas		**Muy de acuerdo**	**De acuerdo**	**Indeciso**	**En desacuerdo**	**Muy en desacuerdo**
Limitaciones	19. Me siento socialmente aislado cuando uso el blended learning.					
	20 El blended learning es difícil de manejar y por lo tanto frustrante para usar.					
	21. Las conexiones lentas a Internet son un importante problema que enfrento cuando utilizo el blended learning.					
	22. Yo enfrento problemas técnicos cuando utilizo el blended learning.					
	23. Yo prefiero aprender del libro y no del sitio web del curso.					
	24. El blended learning facilita el engaño y el plagio.					
	25. Tanto la interacción					

	sincrónica y asincrónica a través de la plataforma son menos eficaces que los la interacción en el aula.					
	26. Yo no tengo una computadora y por lo tanto, me resulta difícil utilizar el blended learning.					
	27. Las instrucciones que aparecen en la plataforma son difíciles seguir.					
Afirmaciones		**Muy de acuerdo**	**De acuerdo**	**Indeciso**	**En desacuerdo**	**Muy en desacuerdo**
Sugerencias	28. Nuestra Facultad debe aumentar el número de cursos con ayuda de blended learning.					
	29. El número de salas de Internet se debe aumentar.					
	30. Todos los problemas técnicos deben ser resueltos.					
	31. La formación sobre el manejo del blended					

	learning se debe proporcionar a todos los estudiantes.					
	32. Nuestra facultad debe reducir el número de cursos que usan blended learning					
	33. Se debe premiar a los distinguidos usuarios de cursos que tienen blended learning.					

PART 3

4. En su opinion cuáles son las ventajas del blended learning?

5. En su opinión cuales son las limitaciones del blended learning?

6. Cuáles son sus sugerencias con respecto al mejoramiento del blended learning en la Universidad?

Appendix B

Students Questionnaire Codebook

Alfabetizacion_informatica

		Value	Count	Percent
Standard Attributes	Position	2		
	Label	¿Cómo califica su alfabetización informática?		
	Type	Numeric		
	Format	F1		
	Measurement	Ordinal		
	Role	Input		
Valid Values	1	Debil	2	7.1%
	2	Buena	16	57.1%
	3	Muy buena	8	28.6%
	4	Excelente	2	7.1%

Tenencia_de_computadora

		Value	Count	Percent
Standard Attributes	Position	3		
	Label	¿Tiene computadora en casa?		
	Type	Numeric		
	Format	F1		
	Measurement	Nominal		
	Role	Input		
Valid Values	1	Sí	17	60.7%
	2	No	11	39.3%

Internet_en_casa

		Value	Count	Percent
Standard Attributes	Position	4		
	Label	¿Usted tiene acceso a Internet desde su casa		
	Type	Numeric		
	Format	F1		
	Measurement	Nominal		
	Role	Input		
Valid Values	1	Sí	12	42.9%
	2	No	16	57.1%

Lugar_preferido_de_uso_de_internet

	Value	Count	Percent

Standard Attributes	Position	5		
	Label	¿Donde prefiere hacer uso de la Internet para el aprendizaje en línea?		
	Type	Numeric		
	Format	F1		
	Measurement	Nominal		
	Role	Input		
Valid Values	1	En la casa	24	85.7%
	2	En la universidad	3	10.7%
	3	En un cafe internet	1	3.6%

Disfruta_hablar_sobre_BL

		Value	Count	Percent
Standard Attributes	Position	6		
	Label	¿Usted disfruta conversar con otros sobre el blended learning?		
	Type	Numeric		
	Format	F1		
	Measurement	Nominal		
	Role	Input		
Valid Values	1	Si	24	85.7%
	2	No	4	14.3%

Acuerdo_BL_perdidadetiempo

		Value	Count	Percent
Standard Attributes	Position	7		
	Label	¿Usted está de acuerdo con quienes dicen que el blended learning es una pérdida de tiempo?		
	Type	Numeric		
	Format	F1		
	Measurement	Nominal		
	Role	Input		
Valid Values	1	Si	1	3.6%
	2	No	27	96.4%

Listening

		Value	Count	Percent
Standard Attributes	Position	8		
	Label	1. Creo que el uso de blended learning me ayuda a mejorar mi habilidades de escucha de Inglés.		
	Type	Numeric		
	Format	F8.2		
	Measurement	Ordinal		
	Role	Input		
Valid Values	1.00	Muy en desacuerdo	0	0.0%
	2.00	En desacuerdo	0	0.0%
	3.00	Indeciso	0	0.0%
	4.00	De acuerdo	17	60.7%
	5.00	Muy de acuerdo	11	39.3%

Speaking

		Value	Count	Percent
Standard Attributes	Position	9		
	Label	2. Creo que el uso de blended learning me ayuda a mejorar mis habilidades para hablar inglés,		
	Type	Numeric		
	Format	F8.2		
	Measurement	Ordinal		
	Role	Input		
Valid Values	1.00	Muy en desacuerdo	0	0.0%
	2.00	En desacuerdo	0	0.0%
	3.00	Indeciso	0	0.0%
	4.00	De acuerdo	21	75.0%
	5.00	Muy de acuerdo	7	25.0%

Reading

		Value	Count	Percent
Standard Attributes	Position	10		
	Label	3. Creo que el uso de blended learning me ayuda a mejorar mi habilidades de lectura en inglés		
	Type	Numeric		
	Format	F8.2		
	Measurement	Ordinal		
	Role	Input		
Valid Values	1.00	Muy en desacuerdo	0	0.0%
	2.00	En desacuerdo	0	0.0%
	3.00	Indeciso	1	3.6%
	4.00	De acuerdo	21	75.0%
	5.00	Muy de acuerdo	6	21.4%

Writing

		Value	Count	Percent
Standard Attributes	Position	11		
	Label	4. Creo que el uso de blended learning me ayuda a mejorar mi habilidades de escritura en inglés		
	Type	Numeric		
	Format	F8.2		
	Measurement	Ordinal		
	Role	Input		
Valid Values	1.00	Muy en desacuerdo	0	0.0%
	2.00	En desacuerdo	0	0.0%
	3.00	Indeciso	4	14.3%
	4.00	De acuerdo	19	67.9%
	5.00	Muy de acuerdo	5	17.9%

Pronunciation

		Value	Count	Percent
Standard Attributes	Position	12		
	Label	5. Creo que el uso de blended learning me ayuda a mejorar mi pronunciación en inglés		
	Type	Numeric		
	Format	F8.2		
	Measurement	Ordinal		

	Role	Input		
Valid Values	1.00	Muy en desacuerdo	0	0.0%
	2.00	En desacuerdo	0	0.0%
	3.00	Indeciso	1	3.6%
	4.00	De acuerdo	19	67.9%
	5.00	Muy de acuerdo	8	28.6%

Spelling

		Value	Count	Percent
Standard Attributes	Position	13		
	Label	6. Creo que el uso de blended learning me ayuda a mejorar mi ortografía en inglés		
	Type	Numeric		
	Format	F8.2		
	Measurement	Ordinal		
	Role	Input		
Valid Values	1.00	Muy en desacuerdo	1	3.6%
	2.00	En desacuerdo	2	7.1%
	3.00	Indeciso	4	14.3%
	4.00	De acuerdo	17	60.7%
	5.00	Muy de acuerdo	4	14.3%

Grammar

		Value	Count	Percent
Standard Attributes	Position	14		
	Label	7. Creo que el uso de blended learning me ayuda a mejorar mi gramática en inglés		
	Type	Numeric		
	Format	F8.2		
	Measurement	Ordinal		
	Role	Input		
Valid Values	1.00	Muy en desacuerdo	0	0.0%
	2.00	En desacuerdo	1	3.6%
	3.00	Indeciso	1	3.6%
	4.00	De acuerdo	21	75.0%
	5.00	Muy de acuerdo	5	17.9%

Vocabulary

		Value	Count	Percent
Standard Attributes	Position	15		
	Label	8. Creo que el uso de blended learning me ayuda a mejorar mi vocabulario en inglés.		
	Type	Numeric		
	Format	F8.2		
	Measurement	Ordinal		

	Role	Input		
Valid Values	1.00	Muy en desacuerdo	0	0.0%
	2.00	En desacuerdo	0	0.0%
	3.00	Indeciso	0	0.0%
	4.00	De acuerdo	20	71.4%
	5.00	Muy de acuerdo	7	25.0%
	8.00		1	3.6%

More convinient mode

		Value	Count	Percent
Standard Attributes	Position	16		
	Label	More convinient mode		
	Type	Numeric		
	Format	F8.2		
	Measurement	Ordinal		
	Role	Input		
Valid Values	1.00	Muy en desacuerdo	1	3.6%
	2.00	En desacuerdo	13	46.4%
	3.00	Indeciso	8	28.6%
	4.00	De acuerdo	3	10.7%
	5.00	Muy de acuerdo	3	10.7%

Q10_mejora_la_comunicacion

		Value	Count	Percent
Standard Attributes	Position	17		
	Label	Enhances communication		
	Type	Numeric		
	Format	F8.2		
	Measurement	Ordinal		
	Role	Input		
Valid Values	1.00	Muy en desacuerdo	0	0.0%
	2.00	En desacuerdo	1	3.6%
	3.00	Indeciso	4	14.3%
	4.00	De acuerdo	19	67.9%
	5.00	Muy de acuerdo	4	14.3%

Q11_modalidad_mas_eficaz

	Value	Count	Percent

Standard Attributes	Position	18		
	Label	More efective mode		
	Type	Numeric		
	Format	F8.2		
	Measurement	Ordinal		
	Role	Input		
Valid Values	1.00	Muy en desacuerdo	0	0.0%
	2.00	En desacuerdo	0	0.0%
	3.00	Indeciso	2	7.1%
	4.00	De acuerdo	18	64.3%
	5.00	Muy de acuerdo	8	28.6%

Q12_interesante_y_util

		Value	Count	Percent
Standard Attributes	Position	19		
	Label	Useful and insteresting		
	Type	Numeric		
	Format	F8.2		
	Measurement	Ordinal		
	Role	Input		
Valid Values	1.00	Muy en desacuerdo	0	0.0%
	2.00	En desacuerdo	0	0.0%
	3.00	Indeciso	0	0.0%
	4.00	De acuerdo	18	64.3%
	5.00	Muy de acuerdo	10	35.7%

Q13_aprendizaje_a_su_propio_ritmo

		Value	Count	Percent
Standard Attributes	Position	20		
	Label	Self-paced learning		
	Type	Numeric		
	Format	F8.2		
	Measurement	Ordinal		
	Role	Input		
Valid Values	1.00	Muy en desacuerdo	0	0.0%
	2.00	En desacuerdo	0	0.0%
	3.00	Indeciso	4	14.3%
	4.00	De acuerdo	18	64.3%
	5.00	Muy de acuerdo	6	21.4%

Q14_desarrollo_comp_and_internet

		Value	Count	Percent

Standard Attributes	Position	21		
	Label	Knowledge of computer and Internet		
	Type	Numeric		
	Format	F8.2		
	Measurement	Ordinal		
	Role	Input		
Valid Values	1.00	Muy en desacuerdo	0	0.0%
	2.00	En desacuerdo	1	3.6%
	3.00	Indeciso	3	10.7%
	4.00	De acuerdo	17	60.7%
	5.00	Muy de acuerdo	7	25.0%

Q15_mayor_confianza_en_linea

		Value	Count	Percent
Standard Attributes	Position	22		
	Label	More confident online		
	Type	Numeric		
	Format	F8.2		
	Measurement	Ordinal		
	Role	Input		
Valid Values	1.00	Muy en desacuerdo	0	0.0%
	2.00	En desacuerdo	10	35.7%
	3.00	Indeciso	8	28.6%
	4.00	De acuerdo	7	25.0%
	5.00	Muy de acuerdo	3	10.7%

Q16_uso_efectivo_del_tiempo

		Value	Count	Percent
Standard Attributes	Position	23		
	Label	Effective use of time		
	Type	Numeric		
	Format	F8.2		
	Measurement	Ordinal		
	Role	Input		
Valid Values	1.00	Muy en desacuerdo	0	0.0%
	2.00	En desacuerdo	2	7.1%
	3.00	Indeciso	3	10.7%
	4.00	De acuerdo	22	78.6%
	5.00	Muy de acuerdo	1	3.6%

Q17_comentarios_utiles

	Value	Count	Percent

Standard Attributes	Position	24		
	Label	Benefit from teacher feedback		
	Type	Numeric		
	Format	F8.2		
	Measurement	Ordinal		
	Role	Input		
Valid Values	1.00	Muy en desacuerdo	0	0.0%
	2.00	En desacuerdo	1	3.6%
	3.00	Indeciso	0	0.0%
	4.00	De acuerdo	13	46.4%
	5.00	Muy de acuerdo	14	50.0%

Q18_materiales_autenticos

		Value	Count	Percent
Standard Attributes	Position	25		
	Label	Access to authentic material		
	Type	Numeric		
	Format	F8.2		
	Measurement	Ordinal		
	Role	Input		
Valid Values	1.00	Muy en desacuerdo	0	0.0%
	2.00	En desacuerdo	0	0.0%
	3.00	Indeciso	2	7.1%
	4.00	De acuerdo	18	64.3%
	5.00	Muy de acuerdo	8	28.6%

Q19 Feeling socially isolated

		Value	Count	Percent
Standard Attributes	Position	26		
	Label	Feeling socially isolated		
	Type	Numeric		
	Format	F8.2		
	Measurement	Ordinal		
	Role	Input		
Valid Values	1.00	Muy en desacuerdo	2	7.1%
	2.00	En desacuerdo	15	53.6%
	3.00	Indeciso	4	14.3%
	4.00	De acuerdo	5	17.9%
	5.00	Muy de acuerdo	2	7.1%

Q20 Difficult and frustrating to use

	Value	Count	Percent

Standard Attributes	Position	27		
	Label	Difficult and frustrating to use		
	Type	Numeric		
	Format	F8.2		
	Measurement	Ordinal		
	Role	Input		
Valid Values	1.00	Muy en desacuerdo	4	14.3%
	2.00	En desacuerdo	17	60.7%
	3.00	Indeciso	4	14.3%
	4.00	De acuerdo	3	10.7%
	5.00	Muy de acuerdo	0	0.0%

Q21 Slow internet connections

		Value	Count	Percent
Standard Attributes	Position	28		
	Label	Slow internet connections		
	Type	Numeric		
	Format	F8.2		
	Measurement	Ordinal		
	Role	Input		
Valid Values	1.00	Muy en desacuerdo	2	7.1%
	2.00	En desacuerdo	12	42.9%
	3.00	Indeciso	3	10.7%
	4.00	De acuerdo	8	28.6%
	5.00	Muy de acuerdo	3	10.7%

Q22 Technical problems

		Value	Count	Percent
Standard Attributes	Position	29		
	Label	Technical		
	Type	Numeric		
	Format	F8.2		
	Measurement	Ordinal		
	Role	Input		
Valid Values	1.00	Muy en desacuerdo	1	3.6%
	2.00	En desacuerdo	13	46.4%
	3.00	Indeciso	3	10.7%
	4.00	De acuerdo	8	28.6%
	5.00	Muy de acuerdo	3	10.7%

Q23 Learning preference for books

		Value	Count	Percent

Standard Attributes	Position	30		
	Label	Learning preference for books		
	Type	Numeric		
	Format	F8.2		
	Measurement	Ordinal		
	Role	Input		
Valid Values	1.00	Muy en desacuerdo	2	7.1%
	2.00	En desacuerdo	20	71.4%
	3.00	Indeciso	2	7.1%
	4.00	De acuerdo	2	7.1%
	5.00	Muy de acuerdo	2	7.1%

Q24 Facilitates cheating

		Value	Count	Percent
Standard Attributes	Position	31		
	Label	Facilitates cheating		
	Type	Numeric		
	Format	F8.2		
	Measurement	Ordinal		
	Role	Input		
Valid Values	1.00	Muy en desacuerdo	2	7.1%
	2.00	En desacuerdo	17	60.7%
	3.00	Indeciso	3	10.7%
	4.00	De acuerdo	5	17.9%
	5.00	Muy de acuerdo	1	3.6%

B. Learning less effective

		Value	Count	Percent
Standard Attributes	Position	32		
	Label	B. Learning less effective		
	Type	Numeric		
	Format	F8.2		
	Measurement	Ordinal		
	Role	Input		
Valid Values	1.00	Muy en desacuerdo	4	14.3%
	2.00	En desacuerdo	9	32.1%

	3.00	Indeciso	10	35.7%
	4.00	De acuerdo	4	14.3%
	5.00	Muy de acuerdo	1	3.6%

Q26 No computer acces

		Value	Count	Percent
Standard Attributes	Position	33		
	Label	No computer acces		
	Type	Numeric		
	Format	F8.2		
	Measurement	Ordinal		
	Role	Input		
Valid Values	1.00	Muy en desacuerdo	7	25.0%
	2.00	En desacuerdo	11	39.3%
	3.00	Indeciso	4	14.3%
	4.00	De acuerdo	5	17.9%
	5.00	Muy de acuerdo	1	3.6%

Q27

		Value	Count	Percent
Standard Attributes	Position	34		
	Label	Difficult platform instructions		
	Type	Numeric		
	Format	F8.2		
	Measurement	Ordinal		
	Role	Input		
Valid Values	1.00	Muy en desacuerdo	5	17.9%
	2.00	En desacuerdo	16	57.1%
	3.00	Indeciso	4	14.3%
	4.00	De acuerdo	3	10.7%
	5.00	Muy de acuerdo	0	0.0%

Q28 Increase of blended courses

		Value	Count	Percent
Standard Attributes	Position	35		
	Label	Increase of blended courses.		
	Type	Numeric		
	Format	F8.2		
	Measurement	Ordinal		
	Role	Input		
Valid Values	1.00	Muy en desacuerdo	0	0.0%
	2.00	En desacuerdo	1	3.6%

	3.00	Indeciso	1	3.6%
	4.00	De acuerdo	18	64.3%
	5.00	Muy de acuerdo	8	28.6%

Q29 Increase of computer classrooms

		Value	Count	Percent
Standard Attributes	Position	36		
	Label	Increase of computer classrooms		
	Type	Numeric		
	Format	F8.2		
	Measurement	Ordinal		
	Role	Input		
Valid Values	1.00	Muy en desacuerdo	1	3.6%
	2.00	En desacuerdo	1	3.6%
	3.00	Indeciso	0	0.0%
	4.00	De acuerdo	13	46.4%
	5.00	Muy de acuerdo	13	46.4%

Q30 Solve technical problems

		Value	Count	Percent
Standard Attributes	Position	37		
	Label	Solve technical problems		
	Type	Numeric		
	Format	F8.2		
	Measurement	Ordinal		
	Role	Input		
Valid Values	1.00	Muy en desacuerdo	1	3.6%
	2.00	En desacuerdo	0	0.0%
	3.00	Indeciso	1	3.6%
	4.00	De acuerdo	16	57.1%
	5.00	Muy de acuerdo	10	35.7%

Q31 Proper training for students

		Value	Count	Percent
Standard Attributes	Position	38		
	Label	Proper training for students		
	Type	Numeric		
	Format	F8.2		
	Measurement	Ordinal		
	Role	Input		
Valid Values	1.00	Muy en desacuerdo	0	0.0%

	2.00	En desacuerdo	0	0.0%
	3.00	Indeciso	0	0.0%
	4.00	De acuerdo	15	53.6%
	5.00	Muy de acuerdo	13	46.4%

Q32 Decrease blended courses

		Value	Count	Percent
Standard Attributes	Position	39		
	Label	Decrease blended courses		
	Type	Numeric		
	Format	F8.2		
	Measurement	Ordinal		
	Role	Input		
Valid Values	1.00	Muy en desacuerdo	5	17.9%
	2.00	En desacuerdo	14	50.0%
	3.00	Indeciso	1	3.6%
	4.00	De acuerdo	6	21.4%
	5.00	Muy de acuerdo	2	7.1%

Q33 Reward the distinguished

		Value	Count	Percent
Standard Attributes	Position	40		
	Label	Reward the distinguished		
	Type	Numeric		
	Format	F8.2		
	Measurement	Ordinal		
	Role	Input		
Valid Values	1.00	Muy en desacuerdo	0	0.0%
	2.00	En desacuerdo	1	3.6%
	3.00	Indeciso	1	3.6%
	4.00	De acuerdo	18	64.3%
	5.00	Muy de acuerdo	8	28.6%

Appendix C

Open ended questions: categorization and coding of students answers

Respondent ID	RESPONSES TO OQ1: ¿En su opinion cuáles son las ventajas del blended learning?		Themes	Refined themes	codes
001	Nos proporciona mejoramiento en el aprendizaje del inglés. Nos ayuda con el mejoramiento de lectura y aprendizaje del inglés tanto en lectura y escritura.	I	Improves reading and writing	Improves language skills:	I
002	Facilidad de aprendizaje. Manejo de herramientas que no sabías utilizar antes. Accesibilidad de conocimiento.	A	acces to knowledge with ICT tools	Improves reading and writing	
003	El blended learning hace que la enseñanza y el aprendizaje sean más eficaces ya que por medio de ella se integran todas las formas de comunicación tales como el audio, vídeo entre otros.	M	More effective mode	Helps with vocabulary learning	
004	Las ventajas del blended learning son las oportunidades de realizar las actividades varias veces hasta lograr la excelencia y así aprendemos de los errores.	M	possibility of redoing activities	Learning vocabulary	
005	Novedoso, práctico, útil, eficaz, entendible, versátil, mejor aprendizaje, moderno, adsequible.	M	More effective mode	Improves writing and pronunciation	
006	Que se puede aprender de manera autónoma.	S	self-paced learning	Improving speaking and reading	
007	Es importante ya que se le facilita al estudiante comunicarse con el docente para poder realizar algunas actividades de nuestro curso o semestre.	B	benefit from teacher feedback	Helps develop abilities	
008	No enreda a las personas a la hora de hacer una actividad y es muy fácil de usarlo.	E	Easy to use	Acces to knowledge with ICT tools	A
009	Mi opinión sobre las ventajas del blended learning es que aprendemos más en nuestra casa sin salir de ella.	S	Allows learning more at home	More effective mode	M
010	Permite mejorar nuestra capacidad en el uso de las tic. Nos ayuda a mejorar en nuestro vocabulario	I	Helps with vocabulary learning	possibility of redoing activities	

	pues en esta modalidad encontramos muchos audios.				
011	La ventaja de tener blended learning es que medimos la autonomía y responsabilidad del aprendizaje	S	provides learner autonomy and responsability	Allows review of previous classroom topics	
012	Las ventajas son: porque nos ayuda a ver los foros y tener todos las actividades que realizamos individuales como una herramienta con ayuda en nuestra carrera.	B	benefit from teacher feedback	self-paced learning	S
013	Facilita el estudio del estudiante además el estudiante puede estudiar las 24 horas del día si así lo desea.	M	posibility of studying at any time	provides learner autonomy and responsability	
014	En la que nos brinda diferentes materias para lograr un aprendizaje eficaz como videos, guías, ejercicios que nos ayuda para nuestra formación.	M	More effective mode	posibility of studying at any time	
016	Me gusta este método de enseñanza ya que puedo realizar mis actividades en cualquier lugar y espacio, puedo escuchar y observar muchas veces las actividades.	S	Available from any place and time	Allows learning more at home	
017	La ventaja del blended learning es que ayuda a desarrollar las habilidades y potencialidades del ser humano y ayuda a desarrollar el proceso de enseñanza y aprendizaje.	I	Helps develop abilities	Available from any place and time	
018	La ventaja es que ayuda a obtener nuevos conocimientos y el de tener una mejor comunicación.	B	Enhances cmmunication	study and practica from anywhere	
019	Facilita la realización de actividades académicas. Puedo trabajar a mi propio ritmo teniendo en cuenta mi tiempo y disponibilidad.	S	self-paced learning	A flexible mode	
020	Aprender más a reforzar el vocabulario en inglés lo cual será necesario en el futuro.	I	Learning vocabulary	Effective use of time	
021	Las ventajas son que tenemos mejor manejo del inglés, mejor escritura, pronunciación etc.	I	Improves writing and pronunciation	benefit from teacher feedback	B
022	Que con el blended learning podemos retroalimentar lo que el docente uso en el aula de clases. Puedo practicar y estudiar ya sea desde la casa o un café internet.	S	study and practica from anywhere	Enhances cmmunication	

023	Para mí, una de las ventajas importantes que tiene el blended learning es que puedo trabajar a mi propio ritmo, que es fundamental cuando se tienen otras ocupaciones como trabajar y estudiar al mismo tiempo.	S	self-paced learning	Easy to use	E
024	La ventaja que yo consigo es que este medio es muy factible y productivo ya que uno hace la profundización del tema visto con anterioridad o viceversa. Esto nos ayuda a estar activos con el programa de inglés.	M	Allows review of previous classroom topics		
025	Las ventajas del blended learning es muy interesante por que a través de la web tenemos más tiempo para hacer las cosas de las casa y también nos queda tiempo para estudiar.	S	Effective use of time		
026	El blended learning tiene varias ventajas tales como: nos permite interactuar con los maestros y podemos mejorar el habla y la lectura de los textos.	I	Improving speaking and reading		
027	Aumenta la apropiación de conocimientos, es flexible.	S	A flexible mode		
028	Ventajas como: uso del tiempo, y a mi propio ritmo.	S	self-paced learning		

Respondent ID	OQ2: En su opinión cuales son las limitaciones del blended learning?		**Themes**	**Refined themes**	**codes**
001	Que algunas personas a veces no poseen internet en su casa.	n	No computer access	No computer access	n
002	La conexión de Internet	i	No internet connection	No internet connection	i
003	Las limitaciones del blended learning es que todos los estudiantes no	n	No computer access	No platform access	

	cuentan con una computadora y por lo tanto nos resulta difícil utilizarlo.				
004	Esta estrategia se vuelve limitada cuando los usuarios no tienen acceso a la plataforma.	i	No platform access	Slow internet connections	s
005	La mala conexión de Internet, la falta de Internet en casa, no tener dinero para pagar horas en café internet	i	No internet connection	Computer literacy	l
006	El Internet cuando es lento.	s	Slow internet connections	Technical problems	t
007	Puedo opinar que una de las limitaciones que tuve fue cuando empecé a experimentar este programa pero gracias a la colaboración y explicación del profesor todo mejoró.	l	Computer literacy	Difficult and frustrating to use	d
008	Muchas veces para mí personalmente no me aparecían los audio para estudiar.	t	Difficulty with audio Technical problems	feeling socially isolated	f
009	Las limitaciones es que yo presiento que tengo dificultades al utilizar el blended learning.	d	Difficult and frustrating to use	few computer classrooms	c
010	Los problemas que encontramos al utilizar la plataforma. Nos disminuye nuestro trabajo en equipo.	f	Slows group work	pronunciation	p
011	Tengo dificultad en los audios porque son un poco rápidos.	t	Audio files too fast		
012	La falencia de Internet en las comunidades la cual fue una falencia para este programa porque fue una gran ayuda para cada uno de nosotros como educandos de la Universidad de La Guajira.	i	No internet connection		
013	La falta de un computador e internet para un estudiante.	n	No computer access		
014	En la que no es un contacto directo con los compañeros y tratar, por medio del chat y intercambiar opiniones.	f	feeling socially isolated		
016	Las limitaciones que he tenido es la falta de acceso a la página ya que no cuento con Internet y computador en mi casa.	n	No computer access		
017	Pues se me dificulta la escritura del inglés y el escucha para así mejorar.	t	Difficulty with audio Technical problems		
018	La dificultad de una conexión lenta en el cual no puede ingresar instantáneamente a blended learning.	s	Slow internet connections		

019	Acceso a Internet.	i	No internet connection
020	La pronunciación.	p	Pronunciation
021	Sus limitaciones al principio son un poco complicadas pero ya después con la práctica se le facilita el uso.	d	Difficult and frustrating to use
022	Los vídeos son algo lentos. Los sonidos no descargan. Imágenes no salen.	s	Slow internet connections
023	Mi única limitación con el blended learning es que me limita a interactuar con mis compañeros y docentes de cierta forma.	f	feeling socially isolated
024	Su única limitación es que yo le veo es que hay muy pocas salas que a veces están muy llenas y no logramos realizar en el tiempo que se estipula los trabajos virtuales del blended learning.	c	Few computer classrooms
025	El blended learning es difícil de utilizar por las lentas conexiones de Internet.	s	Slow internet connections
026	El blended learning es difícil de utilizar por las lentas conexiones de Internet.	s	Slow internet connections
027	Los problemas técnicos.	t	technical problems
028	Ciertamente a muchos las limitaciones del blended learning es la conexión a Internet.	i	No internet connection

Respondent ID	OQ3: Cuáles son sus sugerencias con respecto al mejoramiento del blended learning en la Universidad?		**Themes**	**Refined themes**	**codes**
001	Que se deben proporcionar más en la Universidad para tomar las como una herramienta de mayor utilidad.	i	Increase of blended courses	Increase of blended courses	i
002	Más interacción con el docente. Y una de explicación más sencilla del salón virtual.	p	Proper training for students	Proper training for students	p
003	Que el manejo del blended learning se aplique en todos los estudiantes.	i	Increase of blended courses	Reward the distinguished	r
004	Sugiero que se premie o se reconozca el trabajo de los	r	Reward the distinguished	Increase of computer classrooms	c

	usuarios que acceden a la plataforma				
005	Una sala exclusiva para el curso de inglés dotadas de audio y vídeo beam para proyectar, tener un salón destinado para las clases.	c	Increase of computer classrooms	Bring computers to the classroom	b
006	Apoyo en la parte virtual	p	Proper training for students	More social contact	s
007	Importante sería que se implementara o se diera a conocer mejor el blended learning en nuestra Universidad	i	Increase of blended courses	Do online partials	d
008	La verdad la única sugerencia es que a veces algún archivo sonoro no sale pero la verdad es que es un buen método de estudio.	p	Proper training for students	More dinamic classes	m
009	La sugerencia sería que nos dieran más cursos para usar blended learning	i	Increase of blended courses		
010	Realizar una campaña que permita que se utilicen en el aula de clase un ordenador así sea por grupos donde el tutor nos ayude en el uso de la plataforma.	b	Bring computers to the classroom		
011	Quisiera que mejorara en este tipo de estudios en la Universidad ya que algunos profesores no manejan la tecnología y sólo se dedican a la educación tradicional.	i	Increase of blended courses		
012	La Universidad debería tener una sala sólo para las actividades de inglés y una biblioteca que le ayude a los estudiantes para que puedan desarrollar en ella ya que es importante tener presente para un buen desempeño en el aula de clases.	c	Increase of computer classrooms		
013	Implementar más salas de Internet para los estudiantes que no tienen computadora en sus casas y puedan realizar sus estudios aquí en la institución educativa.	c	Increase of computer classrooms		
014	La sugerencia sería que tuviera contacto con los compañeros, en la manera en el que sólo actividades, vídeos.	s	More social contact		

016	Colocar más actividades en la plataforma. Realizar siquiera un parcial virtual.	d	Do online partials
017	Personalmente que este medio sea utilizado para todos los estudiantes de universidad en el proceso de enseñanza del inglés.	i	Increase of blended courses
018	Mi sugerencia es que más estudiantes sepan del blended learning de las oportunidades que nos brinda para mejorar nuestro estudio.	i	Increase of blended courses
019	Implementarlo en todas las carreras.	i	Increase of blended courses
020	Ser más dinámico en las clases para poder comprender mejor.	m	More dinamic classes
021	Ningunas, todas perfectas. Se hace un buen uso ya que la inspiración son fáciles de manejar. Sería bueno que todas las carreras utilicen el blended learning.	i	Increase of blended courses
022	Que las carreras utilicen más este método. Que se hagan socialización es sobre el debido uso de esta herramienta de aprendizaje. Que los docentes como los estudiantes utilicen este método. Que haga clases por línea y actividades.	i	Increase of blended courses
023	Una sugerencia importante es que se deben aumentar las salas de Internet y sobre todo proporcionar a todos los estudiantes este curso para crear autonomía en el estudio para ellos.	c	Increase of computer classrooms
024	Aumentar las salas de Internet, crear espacios en las cuales uno tenga acceso de Internet desde su propio equipo ya sea un móvil, PC etcétera.	c	Increase of computer classrooms
025	Que nuestro programa de formación debe aumentar el número de cursos con ayuda del blended learning, el número de salas de Internet se debe aumentar.	i	Increase of blended courses

026	Sugiero que en todas las carreras de la Universidad se utilice el blended learning	i	Increase of blended courses
027	Aumento de salas informáticas. Tutoriales acerca del uso del blended learning.	c	Increase of computer classrooms
028	Mayor conectividad, aumento de las salas de computación y audiovisuales.	c	Increase of computer classrooms